Sports
Woods rules World Challenge

World / A10
Baghdad bomber kills 7 one year after Saddam capture

Lifestyle / C5
Underwater gardens need rescue

Metro / A22
'Acetylene Gang' busted; 21 suspects nabbed

Tanong ng Bayan / A18
Bawis sa pool at alak, dapat bang tawsan?

Credit downgrade Palace bogey–Joker

By Michael Lim Ubac

Landslide buries village in Camarines Sur; 8 dead

By Jol Li. Recasen and Michael Joaquin
INQ Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—Eight people were killed, scores others were injured and another was missing after a landslide buried a remote village in Camarines Sur at about 1 a.m. yesterday, the local Office of Civil Defense said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, December 14, 2004 • 36 pages / vol. 20

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FPJ condition turns for worst

FORMER Sen. Luis so Laggrda, Poe's running mate in the May presidential election, arrives at the hospital where the actor remains in critical condition after a stroke with her miraculous image of the Our Lady of Manaoag.

Wife Susan 'remains strong'

By Carlos Pablo, Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Lupa A. del Puerto

HIS HAIR was good for three hours but former President Joseph Estrada, in tears, could only stay an hour after seeing his bosom friend sinking deeper in coma.

He tried to talk to him but Fernando Poe Jr seemed beyond reach.

Two days after he slipped into the coma, Poe's condition turned for the worse yesterday and doctors were now helping him to hang on, his friend Rep. Francis Escudero said yesterday.

Poe's family and friends were keeping the vigil.

"I bet right PFJ was still able to hear me saying his heart only today (Monday). As much as he is artificially ventilated and machines in the hospital," Escudero said in a press conference. "Some of his organs are also affected because of his present condition."

Asked on television later if the 65-year-old Poe's condition had, in fact, turned for the worse, Escudero said, "Yes."

At one point in the press conference, Escudero sounded like it was only a matter of time.

"Although his condition deteriorated, we are still praying that his life be lengthened and that he can still wait for some of his loved ones who have yet to arrive and want to see him before anything happens to him," the lawmaker said.

Escudero said a number of Poe's relatives living abroad had started arriving.

Senator Grace Llamasares, the adopted daughter of Poe and his

FOLLOWERS of Fernando Poe Jr. hold a prayer vigil outside Dr. Lolas's Medical Center in Quezon City.

Friends, fans, foes offer prayers for FPJ recovery

THE PRAYERS came from everywhere, from the presidential palace to the Catholic Church and the Muslim bond.

A supporter from the Manaoag of the gravely ill movie king Fernando Poe Jr., who lies comatose in the intensive care unit of St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City, may have said it all.

"This is not about politics anymore, it is about saving a life," said Ed. Arnaiz, chair of the PFJ Movement Sorsogon. He said he hoped people would set aside politics and just pray for Poe's recovery.

Meanwhile Senate President Franklin Drilon said he was only eyed.

"I couldn't believe it. He was so strong," Santiago told the reporters. "We never knew praying for him since we heard the news. We're hoping he will survive this."

And not a severe stroke brought him down on Saturday night. Poe might have been sharing the stage with President Macapagal-Arroyo at the Peninsula in Rizal Manila last night. He and his

GenSan bomb suspects tagged

By Aquiles Z. Zonio
INQ Mindanao Bureau

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Several suspects in the bombing that left 14 people dead and 79 others wounded here Sunday have been identified but no arrests have been made, authorities said yesterday.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack in a public market in the city where both Muslim and communist rebels operate.

But Armed Forces chief Edgar Aglipay said investigators were looking into a dispute between two groups wrangling over a stall in the market, but added: "That is something we still have to prove. We are not discounting that other groups may have done this."

Army Col. Medardo Geslani said earlier that investigators had so far found "no direct link" to the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group, the regional terror network in Southeast Asia. But the commissioner Bora Weapon's Army or the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the country's main Moro separatist group.

"We have suspects but we can't divulge (their identities) right now," Geslani said. "We are validating leads, and maybe later today (new) will be something clearer."

Aglipay and interior Secretary Angelo Reyes

What happened to FPJ

Flavier says Poe recovery extremely hard

By Michael Lim Ubac

ONLY a miracle can save Fernando Poe Jr.

This was the assessment of Sen. Juan Flavier, a public health specialist who served as health secretary during the Ramos administration, when the business yesterday showed him a copy of the latest medical bulletin issued by Dr. Abdias V. Aquino, Poe's attending neurologist.

Flavier said it would be extremely difficult for Poe to recover from his coma as the actor had suffered from cerebral thrombosis and multiple organ failure.

"But it's hard to tell .... Let's hope for the best," said the senator, who found the medical bulletin "vague."

The medical bulletin, for instance, declared that Poe had "multiple organ system involvement." This, according to Flavier, was medical jargon for multiple-organ failure.

WORM'S EYE VIEW OF BRAIN

SCHOOL ON RADIO

Adult dropouts can try on-air learning

By Dona Z. Pazolagan

STILL dreaming of a high school diploma? Then listen to the radio.

The Department of Education has introduced on-air learning as an alternative means for out-of-school adults to get school credits.

Carolina Guerrero, director of DepEd's Bureau of Alternative Learning System, said learning modules designed for students who had not finished school would be broadcast over six provincial FM stations of Studio 23 beginning Network next August month.

The department will pilot this radio-based instruction in six cities—Tagaytay, Lucena, Bacolod, Cebu, Cagayan de Oro and Davao.

Education Secretary Florentino Abad signed a memorandum of agreement with GMA chair Leonardo Litton on Nov. 18.

Do-it-yourselfers is part of the DepEd's program for nonformal education.

Although it mostly concentrates on formal education, DepEd, through its bureau, conducts a home literacy program for illiterate (read: backwards).

It also offers an accreditation and equivalency program for those who had dropped out of school.

The DepEd offers learning programs comparable to formal elementary and high school education. Those are delivered outside of the formal school setup to adults and youths who either have to—or prefer to—school, no time for school or simply have no means to attend school.

A1
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2004
Second FRONTPAGE

Int'l firm says reconstruction may spur RP growth in 2005

SUFFER THE CHILDREN

12M Filipino kids in pain

By Christine V. Esguerra

POVERTY, Armed conflict, Sexually transmitted diseases.

These are the primary threats to the security of children in the Philippines and other developing countries, the United Nations Children's Fund reported yesterday.

"In the Philippines, as in the rest of the world, children are robbed of their childhood because of (these) three devastating factors," said Unicef representative Dr. Nicholas Alipui in a statement.

The Philippines alone has some 12.6 million children reeling from extreme poverty, Alipui said, unlike officials during yesterday's launch of "The State of the World's Children in 2005."

Unicef is seeking the Philippine National Police's help to "prevent crimes against children, prosecute those who have victimized children, and handle cases involving children with sensitivity and regard for their youth."

"Clearly, the police force is part of the solution to provide a protective environment for all children in the Philippines, whether rich or poor," Alipui said.

According to the UN report, 24 percent of the world's least-developed countries suffered wars, if not increased, under-five mortality between 1990 and 2003. The percentage was slightly lower for developing countries with 17.

Many least-developed countries—16 percent—also hosted major armed conflicts to the same period, compared to 27 percent among developing nations and only eight among developed countries.

In Mindanao, the government's all-out war against the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 2000 drove thousands of children from their homes and schools.

MILF was also prevalent among people aged between 15 and 49 last year as 20 percent of the least-developed countries, while 14 percent of developing countries and only 4 percent of developed nations registered a prevalence of the incurable disease.

Alipui said poverty was depriving 90 percent of children in poor countries of access to health services, proper nutrition, quality education, and safe water and sanitation facilities.

An alarming reality is that these deprivations expose them to abuse, forced labor, commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution, paving an evolving cycle for the affected.

Worse, they lead the children to a host of criminal activities, he added.

The profile of a typical youth offender is nothing if not alarming: an elementary school dropout between 14 and 17 years old who hails from a poor family (the report said).

Thus, the idea is to encourage the PNP to "divert from jails to alternative programs" in dealing with youth offenders.

The PNP now has regular units—women and children's desks—in police stations which specifically deal with the problems of women and the youth, be they offenders or victims.

FPJ poll protest hearing today may be canceled

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE PRESIDENTIAL Electoral Tribunal will "most likely" cancel the oral arguments scheduled for today in the election protest filed by actor Fernando Poe Jr. against President Macapagal-Arroyo, court officials said yesterday.

Lawyer Ismael Khan Jr., the tribunal's spokesperson, and Clerk of Court Lucrecinda Pano said the PET would likely cancel the hearing set for 10 a.m. today after both Poe's and Ms Arroyo's lawyers had asked that it be rescheduled.

Khan said the cancellation would have nothing to do with Poe's current medical condition, noting that both parties filed their joint manifestation to cancel the hearing on Thursday. Poe suffered a stroke and was rushed to the hospital on Saturday night.

"As all likelihood, the hearings for (today) would be canceled in view of the joint manifestation by both parties," Khan said.

"They had asked (for) it be reset to the first available date next year," Pano added.

Khan declined to say what would happen to Poe's electoral protest if he did not recover.

"It might not be proper for the court to comment on what may hypothetically happen," Khan said.

But he added that "everybody" in the court was praying for Poe's recovery.

The PET had scheduled for today the oral arguments on Ms Arroyo's "affirmative defenses" against Poe's allegations that she had cheated him of victory in the May 10 elections.

Poe had asked the tribunal on July 23 to declare him the winner of the last presidential election, alleging that Ms Arroyo's camp had tampered with election results in 128,891 precincts nationwide.

In her counter-protest, Ms Arroyo questioned the results from some 20,000 precincts where Poe allegedly cheated her.

She also questioned Poe's legal standing to file the protest since the Supreme Court had not categorically ruled that the actor was a natural-born Filipino at issue.

Ms Arroyo also asked the PET to dismiss Poe's protest since it was allegedly not sufficient in form and substance.

Thank You, Madame President

We, the undersigned organizations engaged in industry and agriculture, deeply appreciate your reactivation of the **National Anti-Smuggling Task Force** (NASTF), with DILG Secretary Angelo Reyes no less, as head. The government loses billions of pesos annually from outright and technical smuggling, which involves undervaluation, underdeclaration, misdeclaration and misclassification of imports. These huge revenue losses, without doubt, contribute immensely to our current fiscal difficulties.

Curbing smuggling levels the playing field for Philippine business, industry and agriculture, substantially ensures their viability, protects the jobs of workers and helps create a climate of stability.

In the new NASTF, a formidable force is now ranged against smuggling. For one, the Task Force has broader capabilities as Secretary Reyes, in his capacity as DILG head, will have the local government units, especially the coastline barangays, and the police, to assist in the campaign.

We also wish to thank Senators Mar Roxas, Juan Ponce Enrile, Richard Gordon, Alfredo Lim and Ramon Magsaysay, Jr., for supporting our call to reactivate the NASTF through the Senate Resolution they sponsored and all the other Senators who helped towards achieving our goals.

Madame President, we support you in your fight against graft and corruption and all forms of criminality. By reactivating the NASTF, you have emplaced a vital cornerstone in the edifice of the Strong Republic.

Thank you, Madame President.

JESUS C. ARRANZA
President
Federation of Philippine Industries

SERGIO ORTIZ LUIS
President
Philippine Exporters Confederation

DONALD G. DEE
Executive Vice-President
Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry

FRANCIS C. CHUA
President
Philippine Chamber of Commerce Foundation

ROBIN C. SY
President
Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry

ALBERTO L. TAÑADA
Lead Convenor
Fair Trade Alliance

ERNESTO M. ORDOÑEZ
National Coordinator
Alyansa Agrikultura

MIGUEL R. VARELA
President
Philippines, Inc.

Sandigan sequesters more Garcia assets

By Rein Conrerus, Jelyzella
and Nestor P. Burgio Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau

THE SANDIGANBAYAN has included a school for caregivers, agricultural lands and a high-end vehicle found in Iloilo and Guimaras among the assets it had sequestered belonging to Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia (ret.) and his family in connection with the hidden wealth case against him.

The Court of Appeals (CA) and the anti-graft court was also looking for Garcia's deposits in at least 18 banks in Iloilo, the general's home province.

Among the assets seized were the ICT International Caregiver Center Inc. in Jaro, Iloilo City, the Kasanyangan Resort in Dumangas, Iloilo, parcels of agricultural land in Guimaras province, and a Honda CRV. Ilonga said the keys were pending.

The vehicle was found without license plates in a repair shop on Delgado Street, Iloilo City, and was taken to Manila for impounding. Ilonga said in a phone interview.

Chief Supt. Ed Ilonga said the anti-graft court was also looking for Garcia's deposits in at least 18 banks in Iloilo, the general's home province.

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4 hurt in small plane crash

FOUR people were injured yesterday when a small private plane crashed in an airstrip in Pulilan, Bulacan, aviation police said.

The Cessna twin-engine plane crashed shortly after takeoff with a pilot and three passengers on board, said Col. Faustino Rosas of the aviation security group.

The plane was destroyed and the extent of the injuries of its four occupants, Rosas said, AFP

Malacañang cancels Christmas parties

MALACAÑANG said all its attached agencies have decided to forgo their annual Christmas celebrations and use the money to shore up donations for typhoon victims.

Presidential Management Staff Director Ignacio Bunye said he was the recommendation of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita to President Macapagal-Arroyo, who approved the offer.

"We realized this decision as early as last week when the employees themselves expressed not to hold any more lavish Christmas parties," Bunye said.

Malacañang is the latest government and private agency to skip the annual Yuletide parties.

SEE Cabinet, page A2

'It will take a long time for us to recover'

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, December 14, 2004
Third Week of Advent

1st Reading: Zep 3:1-2, 9-13
Gospel: Mt 21:28-32

JESUS went on to say, "What do you think of this? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said to him, 'Son, today go and work in my vineyard.' And the son answered, 'I don't want to.' But later he thought better of it and went. Then the father went to the second and gave him the same command. This son replied, 'I will go, sir,' but he did not go.

"Which of the two did what the father wanted?" They answered, "The first." And Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the publicans and the prostitutes are ahead of you on the way to the kingdom of heaven. For John came to show you the way of goodness but you did not believe him, yet the publicans and the prostitutes did. You were witnesses of this, but you neither repented nor believed him."

Reminiscence

"No" comes easy. It's always there ready to come out. When I say "No" I feel I really exist. I'm set off against you, against others. Supposing, against just about everything. Many existentialists—Sartre, Camus, Jaspers—build their views on this. The psychologists maintain that children are certain stages take to saying No in a short but assertive while only the beginning of their independence. It's normal, as it develops, sometimes they hold on after they are saying this. Many are of us indeed. I become a small hard ball when I say No. (I'm not implying there are times we say No, I'm talking only about that reactionary No.)

How about something more than No. There is a pretended No, the pose only that is part of a relationship, any social business capable of turning out or not. No that is pretended for only blocks the path. A neutral Indifferent is for a one to positions those are undefined.

When you say a word like assent or meeting towards people, toward God, towards things, you are submitting. This may sound too easy but there is nothing easy about Yes.

I thank You God for more this morning day:
for the beautifully spotless of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes (E.E. Cummings)

(Servitas Publications Inc., P.O. Box 4011, 1099 Manila, Philippines, Quezon City, Tel. 921-5026, Fax 924-4176, E-mail: servitas@pacific.net.ph, Website: http://www.servitas.org, Servitas Publications No. 2 @ http://groups.yahoo.com/group/servitas-publications/. Servitas is the Philippine Province of the Augustinian Friars.)

Hidi, Quezon—While neighbors hammered their mangled houses back into shape, Elino Perdes stood forlornly on a muddy road staring at the spot which was once home.

His house had been crushed by big boulders set off by back-to-back storms.

Amid the crumbled trees and wrecked dwellings, Perdes spoke quietly with other men about the nightmare they witnessed in what was once a scenic, riverside village called Kinamlutan in Real, one of three Quezon towns worst hit by last week's storms.

All told a similar tale—the booming sound, the flood of logs, the avalanche of mud and rocks, and the total dark for anyone. The only difference was in the magnitude of their loss.

"We were lucky able to save our 11 cattle," said Perdes, 46, a father of nine.

By last count today (Sunday)—not a single wooden post of his one-storey and wood home was spared in the muddy deluge on Mon. 29. But he and his family that big hand was spared the storms that killed at least 140 people and left hundreds missing.

Besides neighbors, Kinamlutan families, left less fortunate. He has two houses. He had moved his belongings to a friend's house, away from a rampaging river, only to see a shoddier wash it away.

Gallardo, a 54-year-old carpenter, managed to shuttle us to rebuild his home. "I have no sum of money," he said.

His wife Leonida said she was thankful at last no one in her family died.

Now, they worried about how to rebuild their battered lives. "It will take a long time for us to recover," Antonio Gallardo said, "It's so hard to buy the things we have lost."

Officials have appealed to foreign governments for money to help building materials to reconstruct houses and water systems and to help harness evacuees feed burned in mind, corks and logs.

Gallardo and Perdes tried to gather enough logs to build new homes, but said they were stopped by local officials for reasons they were. They had no money to buy materials and so moved in with relatives and friends while waiting for the government to help.

It could take a while.

Real's secretary Leo Alonso, said the most urgent business was distributing food and medicine. "We do not have plans on rebuilding houses, maybe next temporary shelters," he said.

Hundreds of Kinamlutan villagers, eager to start new lives elsewhere, tried to leave on the trucks and military helicopters bringing relief goods, but their were turned back by soldiers and the Coast Guard, who were afraid people would overburden the evacuation craft.

In the Real municipal hall, a sign on the wall read: "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!"

There was little holiday cheer as a nearby relief center, where women lined up asking for housing assistance, overlooking their dark children were getting sick in temporary shelters. AP

Landslide buries village in Camarines Sur; 7 dead

Front page A1

After four typhoons ravaged Eastern Luzon for weeks ago, a landslide occurred in Aroro 3, Barangay Baleo in Tinambac town, CBD regional director Amid Capistrano.

"The report we got is that the landslide buried Sitio Sinawo," Capistrano said, adding that rescue teams and ambulances were sent to the area, and a backhoe had cleared the road.

The Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council in Camarines Sur identified the fatalities as Arnulfo Arandelin, 33; Francisco Arandelin Jr., 16; Jessie Rivera, 34; and Arnel, 36; Veronica, 37; Jessie, 15; Francis, 12; and Jessie, 6—all sustained fatalities.

It was not immediately known if the fatalities belonged to one family.

Injured were Francisco Arandelin Sr., 60; Josefina de la Cruz, 52; Lois Segovia, 17; Ariel Segovia, 28; Ely Segovia, 8; Ryan Segovia, 5; and Ismael Segovia, 1.

Still missing is Lea Mella.

Brig. Gen. Ricardo Nicdao, commanding general of the 9th Infantry Division stationed in Fil. Camarines Sur, immediately sent three platoons of soldiers under Lt. Col. Nilo Pedrozo to the landslide site to ensure the victims and retrieve the bodies still trapped under the mud.

Two medical teams were under Col. Arnulfo Ilarina and another team with an ambulance was under Maj. Ruel Custodio, a military doctor.

The landslide hit the coastal town of Tinambac after days of heavy rains brought by back-to-back typhoons, loosened the earth, according to the municipal police chief Insp. Amado Montano.

It toppled power cables past midnight, knocking out electricity in the area. It also buried a portion of the provincial road, hampering rescue work. Montano added.

Governor Luis Raymund Villafuerte asked the national government to dispatch equipment to be used in clearing the road.

Widespread floods and landslides unleashed by two storms left about 1,000 people dead or missing in the Philippines two weeks ago.

Camarines Sur was hardest hit by the devastating storms on Nov. 29 and Dec. 1. At least 800 people were killed and 600 were missing, officials said.

More than 2.3 million people were affected by the storms, which also caused about P3.8 billion in damage, according to the DCD. With reports from Cherie Mae V. Esguerra in Manila, AP and AFP

NPAs warn US troops: You're dangerously close

Limit role to humanitarian assistance or face attacks, says Ka Roger

LUMBAYANQUE (Mindanao) spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said the guerrillas would refrain from attacking foreign soldiers engaged in relief work after a series of typhoons and storms left 1,600 people dead or missing in the Philippines.

The rebels warned the public to on Nov. 30 when they ambushed what the Filipino military described as an armed forces humanitarian mission to help victims of the storms.

The attack left 16 soldiers dead.

Restraint

It said the Philippine military would provide "helicopter landing zones underay" for the US mission, which would operate in areas under leftist influence.

New People's Army (NPA) main targets.

It has been waging a 35-year Maoist campaign to topple the government, which it claims is a puppet of the United States, the former colonial power.

"It would be wise for American troops to refrain from undertaking military operations in the area including intelligence related activities," Rosal said in a statement to news agencies.

Leave immediately

"They are dangerously close to NPA guerrilla zones, and it would be prudent for them to confine themselves to areas where actual relief operations are underway in order to avoid unnecessary encounters."

He urged US troops in favor of ongoing their mission, which the American embassy said would focus on the towns of General Nakar, Infanta and Real coasts in Quezon province.

NPA relief work

Rosal said NPA units in the area would also release their activities toward "socio-economic work, which includes assisting victims in guerrilla zones in production and in the rebuilding of their homes and assets systems."

The US task force on the relief mission will "provide immediate lifesaving support to the flood devastated areas of the Philippines," said its operations officer Lt. Col. Gregory Boal. AFP

Rebels release workers they seized in South

LIMBANGAN (AFP)—Communist rebels kidnapped 14 people working on a government irrigation project in South Cotabato province last week, but freed them a day later when troops caught up with them, the military said yesterday.

New People's Army (NPA) rebels torched bulldozers and other equipment during the raid. Thursday on the construction site in Isulan, Sitio Iwan Indon existing the workers, the military said.

"All the hostages were released and they are all safe," Tinanga said, announcing the rebels," said local Army commander Brig. Gen. Alexander Yapchiong.

The attack apparently came after a failed extortion attempt, he said, without elaboration.

The 9,000-member NPA is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Government peace talks with the group have been suspended. AFP

Flavier says Poe recovery extremely hard

From page A1

"[But] it doesn't say what organ," he said.

Flavier said cerebral thrombosis referred to the formation of a clot (clog) in the coronary arteries, impeding the delivery of blood to parts of the brain that control different functions, organs and tissues of the body.

Like all organs and tissues, the brain needs a constant and immediate supply of oxygen contained in the blood. As a result of thrombosis, oxygenated blood stops flowing into the brain and cells begin to die rapidly. Other body organs—like the kidneys, liver and lungs—that are controlled by these parts of the brain cease to function.

"I heard that the parts of the brain affected (by thrombosis) are increasing ... so the more serious it becomes, the harder to recover," Flavier explained.

"When it affects the part of the brain controlling leg movement, your legs become paralyzed," he said. "But I heard that it had already spread, so more parts of the brain are being affected. The recovery is more difficult (in this case). You cannot conduct a medical operation on the brain if there are too many thrombosis."

He said "severe brain attack (stroke) secondary to multiple infarcts involving both the anterior and posterior brain" simply meant that several parts of the brain had a stroke.

An infarct means that tissues of a particular organ of the body are either dead or dying.

"Due to occlusion of blood vessels" means there are obstructions in blood vessels causing a stroke, according to him. "So there was a lack in oxygen supply in the brain, hindering normal body functions."

According to medical books, the damage to different areas of the brain becomes irreversible 15 to 30 minutes from the onset of oxygen deprivation. If the obstruction in the blood vessel is not relieved, the area of the brain affected dies by infarction.

Flavier said there had been some patients afflicted by cerebral thrombosis who recovered. "But it depends if the case is not severe. But this (Poe's condition) is a multiple case," he said.

Corrections

IN THE DEC. 7 issue, a caption misstated the team in the bottom photograph appearing on Page D4 of the Lifestyle section. In the photograph was the Ateneo de Manila University women's badminton team—not the De la Salle University intercollegiate champion team.

* * *

IN THE DEC. 9 issue, a Special Project article on Page S8—"Hope empowers Visayas"—erroneously identified Juan Miguel del Gallego as the chair of the Visayas regional operations of Philippine Business for Social Progress. Del Gallego is the former chair while John Domingo is the current one.

IN THE DEC. 10 issue, a photo caption in Maurice Arcache's column, "Without Batting an Eyelash," on Page I1 of the Lifestyle section inadvertently identified Jojo Tengco (left) as the president of Nestlé Philippines. Salvador Pigum (second from left) is the company president.

* * *

IN THE DEC. 13 issue, the banner story of the front page—"FPJ in coma; next 72 hours crucial"—misstated the name of Fernando Poe Jr.'s attending physician. The doctor is Abdias—not Anastacio—Aquino. The same story also misstated the source of the information that the actor had been placed on life support. The information was supplied by movie talent and Poe's friend Jonie Tagle—not by Poe's assistant Susan Tagle.

* * *

Reader's may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Monserrat Street, Makati City; fax nos. 897-8703/897-96; e-mail addresses glirio@inquirer.com.ph and dapilak@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Juan Palabrica, reader's advocate, the same addresses but strike out those of the city editor, and e-mail address jpalabrica@inquirer.com.ph.

In the know

What is a stroke?

Stroke is a disease that affects blood vessels supplying oxygen and nutrients to the brain. It occurs when a vessel bursts or is clogged by a blood clot or other particles.

Symptoms of a stroke include blurring or decreased vision in one or both eyes, severe headaches, weakness, numbness, or paralysis of the face, arm or leg that is usually confined to one side of the body, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination.

The effects depend on the stroke's severity. These include sudden change in behavioral style, memory loss, speech or language problems, vision problems and paralysis.

Severe cases can lead to a coma or a deep and usually prolonged unconscious canvas where the patient is unable to respond to external stimuli. A medical website (Postgraduate Medicine Online) said stroke was among the "Big Three" causes of coma; the other two are head (cranial) trauma and drug overdose.

Most vulnerable to stroke are people who are obese, have high cholesterol level or high red blood cell count, cigarette smokers (especially if combined with oral contraceptives), have little physical activity, consume alcoholic drinks above two drinks per day, or use cocaine or intravenous drugs. **PDI Research**

SOURCES: DR. EDEN GUEVARA-PEDRO, LIBRARIAN, PHILIPPINE HEART CENTER; HEARTSURGERY.COM; MEDICINENET.COM; PLANET.COM; CDC; WEB MD

Adult dropouts can try . . .

From page A1

This would be the first time the Depfid would use the media to teach out-of-school adults.

Under the setup, 25 mothers who did not finish school would be selected from each city.

From their homes, they would listen to SEN-FM radio for lessons aired every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 11 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Repeat broadcasts are from 5:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. of the same days.

The special broadcast will start in December and end in May next year.

Chat on air

The learning modules would both be formative and interactive, meaning the learners can chat on air with the instructor, according to the Depfid.

After six months, the Depfid would evaluate the mothers enrolled in the program to check if they acquired the equivalent skills required in basic education.

If the program is successful, the Depfid said it would institutionalize radio-based instruction.

Under the MOA, SEN also agreed to give hiring priority to those who would complete the Depfid program.

"The traditional view of delivering education is only through the school system. But with the BALS around, there exists a flexibility in both educational systems that enable a learner to seek and avail of entry and reentry opportunities in both streams," Guerrero said.

GenSan bomb suspects tagged

Front page A1

flow in this city to assess the damage of the explosion and to oversee the investigation.

Sketch of suspect

Reyes revealed that Intel authorities had already made a sketch of the suspect based on the description given by a female witness who was reportedly standing closest to Staff Sgt. Eli of the truck carrying whose dashboard exploded.

Based on the witness' lead, said police chief at around 2:40 p.m. Sunday, a man in his late 30s, about 5'3" in height, his complexion and security, a cap, bought a kilo of meat. After which, the man reportedly asked permission from the saleslady to leave his bag containing eggs and the meat.

Several minutes later, the explosion happened, killing three persons on the spot and wounding several others.

Mayor Pedro Acharon Jr. said (he's ill) government would host the hospital bills of the blast victims.

Rolling Featherweight champion Manny Pacquiao, fresh from his title defense against a Thai boy, promised to share part of his winnings to the bomb victims.

Before his convincing KO victory over Ishmael Bilkinisy on Saturday, the Filipino boxing hero vowed to use his purse in alleviating the plight of final victims in Lamin. "Surely I will help my own kababayan our there," Pacquiao, a native of Gensan Lamin, said in Ilocanos.

President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered a swift investigation of Sunday's Gensan dyad.

The military and police have been placed on red alert following the bombing.

Soldiers and policemen are now securing vital installations and densely populated areas, such as schools, markets and churches nationwide to prevent another bomb attack.

"The red alert status was declared to anticipate of any contingency situation that may arise as a result of the bombing," Brig. Gen. Alexander Lim, military spokesperson, said at a press conference.

A joint police and military investigating team is looking into the possibility that the attack was the work of the Abu Sayyaf or a last remnant of the MILF.

Military intelligence sources said they were looking into the possible involvement of an MILF faction, whose leader Jack Indanan was killed in a clash with the security forces in Banga, South Cotabato, eight days ago.

"If the blast could also be part of an MILF bombing plan as before and after the fratricides," source said, referring to the Muslim holy month that ended Nov. 15.

The government is seeking to start peace talks with the MILF after signing a ceasefire with the 12,000-member guerrilla force two years ago.

However, MILF officials have so far failed to show up at the negotiating table amid an apparent power struggle following the death from natural causes last year of its leader Salamat Hashim, who founded the movement in 1978.

In Catabato City, MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said his group was in control in the blast.

Kabalu said he had talked with MILF Commander Ameril Umbra Kato, whose areas of operation cover General Santos.

"In whatever capacity our task is to be able to help the government at this time that it is negotiating peace with us. Any involvement to such atrocity would mean violating the 2000 ceasefire agreement that we have entered into with the government," Kabalu said.

The MILF spokesperson just uttered other probable anglers Political subtelogy and retaliation by followers of Ambatuan who was killed by police. *With reports from AP, AFP, Christian V. Esguerra and Juliet Labog-Javellana in Manila; and Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Credit . . .

Front page A1

to push Congress into passing tax measures before the Christmas break.

"But us who have been in government for so long, it's sickening because we have seen it," said Arroyo, referring to the usual ploy of the Palace to use foreign groups "to achieve what government wants to achieve."

In a privilege speech, he said "we are ready people, and we will survive all these."

Maliscalong considers indispensable the passage of tax measures this year to avert a credit rating downgrade.

International ratings from earlier warned that the country's credit rating could be downgraded if none of the proposed fiscal measures were passed before the end of the year.

A downgrade will raise interest rates and further jack up the country's debt payments.

"Now, we are touchy to the slightest hint of downgrade by Moody's, Standard and Poor, and Fitch when we don't even owe them any money," the senator said.

"Before, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and WB (World Bank) would enter only our living rooms, probably our bedrooms. But now, Moody's and company enter as well our bathrooms and we as maids and butlers our essentials for all to see. How dehumanized does can we get?" Arroyo said.

He said "enough already of the much hollyhooed rating agencies and the impending downgrade they are foisting because we have had already a de facto downgrade and in effect have been and are already being felt."

Special session

He said there was a lot of talk about calling a special session so that Congress could pass the tax measures before the end of the holiday season.

"What for? The Senate has been deliberating on the tax bills for three months. But no bicameral concur be tacked and the executive knows that and has not helped any. It wants the legislature to work overtime on the tax bills but the executive does not want to work overtime to collect more taxes," he said.

Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio said President Macapagal-Arroyo would call a special session of Congress if the two House of Representatives and Senate failed to pass at least the tax measures by Thursday.

"The agreement is for Congress to pass at least two of the tax measures before the adjournment of sessions on Friday," Claudio said, adding that the measures should be ratified by Thursday which is the last day of the session.

Six taxes, lateral attrition

Senate President Franklin Drilon yesterday said Congress would try to pass the six taxes and lateral attrition bill before Friday. "Otherwise the President will be forced to call a special session, which we will support," Drilon said.

Under House Bill No. 3279, the House of Representatives wants a 20-percent increase in excise taxes to be imposed on tobacco and alcohol products, while Senate Bill No. 1015, currently under debate, seeks a higher rate.

The lateral attrition bill calls for incentives and penalties on tax collection agencies.

Drilon said the Senate could not pass the tax amnesty bill because of the resistance by some senators.

Arroyo said all revs were initially filed on Congress passing the revenue measures, but he said the onus should be on the executive branch.

He explained that sometime back, a very simple proposition was conveyed to the President through backdoor channels.

The senator said Congress could enact measures that would yield P40 billion on the condition that the Bureau of Internal Revenues and Customs would collect the other half (P40 billion), which represented an additional revenue generation in BIR collections.

But there was no response from the collection agencies, he said.

Breakdown of discipline

"Instead, we are being badgered to pass the Lateral Attrition Law to coerce revenue agencies to collect more taxes," he said.

"Why we need such a law to compel tax collectors to do their duty of increasing their collections is symptomatic of the breakdown of discipline in the bureaucracy. The irony of ironies is that this bill had been enacted already during President Joseph Estrada's time in the 11th Congress but was vetoed by President Arroyo when she assumed office," the senator said.

He also warned the Palace for backing out of its earlier proposal to tax text messages and impose a franchise tax on telecommunication companies. *With reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana and Michelle V. Remo*

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FPJ condition turns for worst

...LUCKY victory includes ex-President Joseph Estrada ...

Front page 1

ordeal, actress Susan Roces, is expected to fly in today from the United States.

The entire third floor of St. Luke's Medical Center, where Poe is confined in the intensive maintenance unit, has been cleared to make space for family and friends.

Poe lapsed into a coma after he suffered what a medical bulletin said may've been a cerebral hemorrhage or "severe brain attack" or stroke. He other internal organs had also been affected, the bulletin said. (See story on Page A1.)

The bulletin was signed by three attending neurologists Dr. Abdias V. Aquino, head of the Stroke Service of the Institute for Neurosciences of St. Luke's.

Given an emergency therapy pass by the hospital-in-charge, where he is on trial for plunder, deposed President Estrada wept when he visited his buddy on Sunday night.

"It was emotional. You know, they have been friends for all years," said Joan Mayor Joseph Estrada. "Pa" (Estrada) said in a cellphone interview.

Can FPJ hear?

"He was already weeping when he got here to the hospital," added Estrada's son by actress Guia Gomez.

Ejercito said that during the visit, his father, demanded in his own inimitable funny mood, repeatedly spoke to Poe, hoping his friend could communicate back after his unconscious.

Poe's 23 year-old son, Senator, met Estrada at the hospital. The young man visited Estrada's hotel in San Juan back—a Filipino sign of respect accorded to the elder by—and the ex-President enjoyed Bonnie lightly.

It was apparent that Estrada was in tears, as Inquirer photographer said.

A phone call

Before he left his Tanay retirement to go to the hospital, Estrada had also called the ICU.

Someone took the call and passed the phone's earpiece down to the unconscious Poe on the chance that he might hear that his friend was talking him.

But Poe gave no sign he heard, those present in the ICU said.

"No simple language," Ejercito said, down-toned from last night, compared to this morning." Ejercito said, interpreting the medical bulletin.

A flicker of hope

Asked about Poe's condition when he last saw him, the former Ejercito lawmaker said: "Ipaw ko nang gumitin pan medyo nakakakitaan ang kimlayan nya (I saw a flicker of hope in him because he was responding)."

Ejercito said Poe had been attached to various life-saving machines and fluid delivery tubes.

He said Poe's family and friends were somewhat buoyed Sunday by the doctor's advice that the actor's heart, sustained strong while pumping blood.

"It was a big change from last (Saturday's) night," Ejercito said of Poe's condition as of yesterday.

While acknowledging that the medical bulletin was not positive, Ejercito said: "We are, of course, praying for the best."

He said Poe's family and friends could only hope that God would listen to the storm of prayers being offered up for his ousted.

Susan's strength

Susan Roces "remains strong and is the source of strength for family and friends," Ejercito said.

Outside the ICU, friends, relatives and fans gathered in different areas to offer prayers. (See story on Page A1.)

The ICU was closed to visitors about midnight Sunday after Estrada's visit to give the two fans by some time to rest, Ejercito said.

The main entrance to the hospital was clogged with hundreds of cameramen, reporters and movie fans waiting to see the personalities who would visit Poe.

Prayers for Poe

As the night deepened, the number of fans rapidly dwindled.

Shortly after midnight, Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and actor Rudy Fernandez emerged from the hospital.

"We were not able to see him inside the ICU. We were told it was already closed, (so) we just went for his speedy recovery," Revilla said.

At about 1 a.m., only a few news photographers remained outside the main entrance.

Still fans and movie personalities went back again as early as 6 a.m. yesterday.

Beyond the hotel medical bulletin, reporters could only get an idea of Poe's condition from the downcast looks of the friends and relatives who exited him.

Grim looks

Most, if not all, who left the building looked grim, and visibly shaken.

Poe's buffalo, issued after hours, only confirmed what many feared—that Poe was falling deeper into the coma.

Expressing on the medical bulletin, Ejercito said: "Last night (October), the heart was beating strong. We held on to it as a sign that he would survive ... but this morning and this afternoon, (the beating) has weakened."

Former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, Gloria Estrada, a former actor, said that during his visit, he saw several doctors in the room at the same time.

"We could not see PFJ ... We stayed outside of the ICU unit. But Susan ... she is very composed," Gonzales said.

Elements of violence, both from the worlds of politics and entertainment, started arriving at 11 a.m. They were still coming as press time.

The well-wishers included Senators Alfredo Lim, Lito Lapid and Agapito Aquino, and Rep. Imee Marcos.

Tears for FPJ

Betting Lakas, Poe's friend and ex-star in many films, came with several other persons from the Commission on Audit (COA).

Asked how Poe was, Lakas said: "He is still in coma."

A few celebrities crept silently, some fought back tears as they left the third floor area where Poe was confined.

Poe's brother, Ismael, looked distraught.

Former Associate Justice Hermosisima, who arrived in the morning, said she had lunch with Susan and Poe's siblings and that they were holding up.

"The family is OK ... they're praying for his quick recovery," the body lawyer said.

NEUROLOGIST Dr. Abdias Aquino of St. Luke's Medical Center is interviewed by journalists about Poe's condition Sunday.

'Health buff' not fond of doctors

By Christine D. Avendaño

HE ONCE played the role of a reluctant hero in a 2000 film titled "Ang Limahikan," but only a few people know that Fernando Poe Jr. isn't fond of being around doctors.

Close friend and former film director Lauro D. said Poe has never been about having his blood pressure checked.

"Hindi nya mahilig mag-patingin (He didn't like going to the doctor)," Soria said in a phone interview.

Still, Poe was a "health buff."

Every month, Soria said, Poe would bike to various life-saving machines and fluid delivery tubes.

He said Poe's family and friends were somewhat buoyed Sunday by the doctor's advice that the actor's heart, sustained strong while pumping blood.

"It was a big change from last (Saturday's) night," Ejercito said of Poe's condition as of yesterday.

While acknowledging that the medical bulletin was not positive, Ejercito said: "We are, of course, praying for the best."

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Friends, fans, foes offer prayers for FPJ recovery

Front page A1

actress, among other people, had been named arbiters of the "People of the Year" awards of Philippine magazine, which were handed out last night.

It would have been their first meeting since Ms Arroyo beat Poe by one million votes in the presidential election. What Poe's camp claimed the victory was stolen by fraud.

A President's prayers

Accepting her award, Ms. Arroyo said she celebrated the triumph and heroism of the Filipino amid adversities.

"But I am sad that our celebration is incomplete with the absence of Fernando Poe Jr. who suffered a severe stroke the other night," Ms. Arroyo said. "He is an icon of our people's aspirations and I have prayed all that time for his speedy recovery," she said in a speech.

"The daily Mass in Malacañang is offered for his intercession," she added.

There were no untoward indications that Ms Arroyo would pay Poe a visit.

A Malacañang source said it would not be in accordance with protocol for her to visit the actor in the hospital. It was also possible that Poe's supporters would not take her presence kindly, the source said.

Indeed if any representatives of Ms Arroyo would visit the critically ill actor, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said, "She has (issued) a statement. For the meantime, I think the statement would suffice."

Bunye ignored reports that the hotel supporters of Poe had sent word for Ms Arroyo not to show up at the hospital.

Flowers from Mall

Vice President Noli de Castro sent a card and flowers to the actor's family.

"My family is praying for (him) recovery ... Our prayers are what he needs now," Mr. de Castro said in a statement.

Many administration officials kept a polite distance and a low profile.

Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio did not want to talk about Poe's ailment but said: "We join the nation in fervent prayers that he will recover soon."

Romulo Macalintal, Mr. de Castro's lawyer in the protest filed by the ousted bet in the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, said this was not the time for politics.

Set politics aside

"This is the time to show our concern for PFJ and his family. This is the time to set aside politics ... and to pray for his family so he ready to cast the Lord, takes him back," Macalintal said in a phone interview.

The country's Roman Catholic bishops also prayed for Poe's recovery.

Said Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines president Orpiso Archbishop Fernando Capalla: "PFJ as a famous actor has been an inspiration for many and, as a presidential candidate, was hailed by many as a symbol of hope for the poor."

A nation's prayers

Capalla urged everyone to once again pray as a nation for the healing of Poe.

"As a Filipino and a Catholic, he deserves everybody's prayers," he said.

San Edgardo Angara, who was Poe's chief political adviser during the election, echoed similar sentiments.

"We are saddened by his dire, ensuing condition because PFJ is a symbolism of unbridled hopes of many Filipinos," Angara said. "He is a symbol of those who are fighting against injustice, oppression and poverty."

He said the tremendous outpouring of prayers for Poe attests of this.

Praying for their idol

A few dozen Poe supporters milled around St. Luke's hospital, all ready to be near him.

"We're here because we want to see our idol," said Liz Gales, who traveled from Bulacan to land. "We want to get first-hand information on him."

Dressmaker Gloria Herrera, 51, told the hospital, "We are very sad and praying for him. He may save the island of Jolo(for) (Poe's longtime friend). If God takes him, we could see do anything about it."

"PFJ really left last about losing the election, that's why he had a stroke," said 40-year-old taxi driver Otto Bellesia in Filipino. "Who wouldn't? He was cheated."

Poe's works of charity

Eugene Crespo, executive director of the disaster management group Citizens Disaster, cited Poe's unpublicized acts of charity.

Before he suffered the stroke, the actor, in a gesture of kindness, turned over 68 sacks of rice, sardines and noodles to typhoon-hapon victims in Infanta, a coalition of non-government organizations advocating a community-based disaster management program.

The goods, totaling 1,000 packs, were donated by FPJ Productions. Poe personally met with 1500 members at his office.

"He did not mind his donations published," Crespo said. "He was in a happy mood. All he asked was an assurance that these would reach the victims. And he said he was going to give more help."

Josefita Santiago, 37, a barber and a jeepney driver for 18 years, said he was never a fan of FPJ because his favorite movie was "movie-cinema."

But Santiago added: "I hope he gets well."

Juliet Lubay-Bordeos, Blanche Rivera, Michael Lim Ubac, Margaret Arch, Tina Arnodos, Faith L. Hipolito and Carla Marie C. Montano in Manila; Carlo Bernal, Jhb Pinpoint Bureau; and Nestle Origina, JNB Central Luzon Bureau

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

Yushchenko: Authorities poisoned me

SATHERING STORM
A seagull flies in front of the Sydney city skyline as a storm approaches Dec. 13. Severe weather closed Sydney's airport and caused property damage after storms hit the city mid-afternoon producing large hailstones and causing flooding. AFP/FILE

KIEV—Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko said on Sunday he was certain Ukraine's authorities had poisoned him with dioxide and hoped prosecutors would establish the truth after this month's re-run of a rigged presidential election.

Speaking to reporters on his return to Kiev a day after Austrian doctors established he had been poisoned, Yushchenko said he did not want the case to allow campaigning for his new runoff against Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich on Jan. 26.

Yushchenko, who drew vast crowds into the streets to back charges of vote-rigging, said retired prosecutors inspecting a case into what he has long said was a bid to kill him. Though in good physical form, his face remains bloated and pocked.

"I am convinced that this is the work of the authorities, absolutely convinced," Yushchenko said at Kiev airport.

"Time is now needed for the investigation. A lot of the circumstances are already known. I think if the general prosecutor acts according to Ukraine's laws, both the country and the world at large will soon know who did this."

He declined to comment further on who exactly lay behind the poisoning or where it might have originated, saying it was up to judges and prosecutors to establish the facts.

Asked Ukrainian officials, including Yushchenko, have yet to comment on the poisoning revelations.

Yanukovich was initially declared the winner of the Nov. 21 runoff poll, during which he was backed by outgoing president Leonid Kuchma and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The Supreme Court annulled the result on grounds of mass fraud.

Yanukovich has since turned on his mentor Kuchma, accusing him of doing nothing to stop the "orange coup"—mass protests by orange-clad Yushchenko supporters.

Yushchenko said he wanted the case to be pursued after the new runoff so he did not want it to have "any taint or stigma of loser, positive or negative, on the election campaign."

Ukrainian media said prosecutors suspected the case after doctors at the Vienna clinic confirmed drastic poisoning. The case was launched after Yushchenko first underwent treatment in September but was later found ill.

Yushchenko had earlier told reporters in Vienna he was "happy to be alive." And he predicted that "the regime that was in place for 14 years in Ukraine is now living its last days."

Yushchenko blamed Ukraine's upheaval after the near-discredited election in the fall of the lower house or the Berlin wall. Thousands of his supporters brought Kiev to a virtual halt for more than two weeks in demand a new poll. Reuters

New attacks on churches in Indonesia prompt alert

JAKARTA—Muslim-dominated Indonesia on Monday ordered more security as potential flashpoints after renewed attacks on Christian churches sparked fears of a repeat of deadly Christmas Eve bombings four years ago.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono told police chiefs to be on alert for possible terrorist attacks around the country after two churches on churches in Central Sulawesi province late Sunday left three people seriously injured.

The separate bomb and gun attacks on the Immanuel and Bongo churches in the provincial capital Poso came just two weeks before Christmas, fueling concerns that extremists were planning more attacks.

A series of blasts at churches across Indonesia on Christmas Eve 2000 left 19 dead. The attacks, blamed on Muslim militants, preceded the October 2002 Bali bombings in which 202 people were killed.

Authorities say the al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah regional terror group was responsible for the Bali attacks. Some have blamed the organization—behind several other major blasts—of having a hand in the church attacks.

Central Sulawesi has seen intermittent violence between Muslims and Christians since more than 1,000 people were killed in clashes four years ago. The government has sponsored peace talks but tensions persist.

Five months ago, gunmen opened fire on a church in Poso, killing a female minister and wounding four worshippers. In May, a prominent Christian prosecutor was killed in Poso as he left another church.

Cabinet Secretary Yusli Mahendra on Monday told journalists that Yudhoyono had summoned top security ministers Widodo Adisucipto and National Police Chief General Da'i Bachtiar to discuss measures to halt further attacks.

"The president instructed the national police chief to step up security and prevention in Poso and anticipate the possibilities ... We should be alert so that this does not take place in other areas," Mahendra said.

He said the cities of Jakarta, Medan in North Sumatra, Makassar in South Sulawesi would get special attention as potential troublespots. Police have already announced extra guards at 326 churches in Surabaya, East Java. AFP

Japan cops step up fight against 'it's me' fraud

TOKYO—You might think that by now most people would know better.

Japanese police and media have been warning the public for months about so-called "it's me" scams in which swindlers cheat victims out of money by phoning and posing as a relative who desperately needs cash to get out of a bind.

Despite the campaign, the victims—often middle-aged or elderly women—were duped out of more than 15 billion yen ($142 million) in the first 10 months of 2004, up from 4.2 billion yen for all of 2003, National Police Agency figures show.

"We keep telling people to be careful and still they are taken in," a police official said on Monday after the Agency set up a special task force to crack down on the scams.

"When someone gets a phone call like this in the midst of a stressful life, they get upset and lose their presence of mind."

The scams typically begin with a call from a person claiming to be a son, daughter or other relative in need of money for such purposes as an out-of-town accident after a traffic accident, to fund a girlfriend's abortion or to pay off a loan shark.

The distraught family member is persuaded to send the funds to a designated bank account by electronic transfer.

"People who were victimized said they'd heard about it, but never thought it would happen to them," the police official said.

The antifraud campaign has, however, prompted some culprits to become more creative.

Many perpetrators now identify themselves as police officers, lawyer or even gangsters acting on behalf of a relative instead of pretending to be a family member and starting the conversation with the "it's, me"—"it's me"—then gave the scam its name.

Such cases, including "theme-call lineage-style fraud," so called because several perpetrators get into an elaborate act playing different roles, carried needless 7 billion yen so far this year, the police data showed.

"I didn't realize it was a fraud because the caller didn't say 'it's me,'" a newspaper quoted one victim as saying. Reuters

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Baghdad bomber kills 7 1 yr after Saddam capture

BAGHDAD—A suicide car bomber killed at least seven Iraqis at an entrance to Baghdad's Green Zone government and US diplomatic compound on Monday, a year to the day since US forces captured Saddam Hussein.

At least 17 people were also wounded, medics hospital staff said. The US military said no US soldiers were hurt.

It was not clear if any of the Iraqi fatalities feared troops which also runs the checkpoint had been killed or wounded.

"We had stopped in the car when all we felt was a car explode next to us," said one injured Iraqi civilian at the city's Iraqi Yarmuk hospital. Six have ended adulthood.

"A suicide bomber hit Checkpoint 12. It's pretty ugly" a US official said inside the Green Zone.

Iraqi police said the bomber drove a car and a US military spokesperson said several other cars were also destroyed.

The checkpoint, close to the main airport highway is on a main entrance to the sprawling complex which was Saddam's presidential palace. It now houses the US and other embassies and the offices of the US-backed Iraqi interim government.

At the civilian Yarmuk hospital, a senior doctor said they had received seven bodies and were treating 17 wounded. Staff refused to a wounded man as doctors sewed up the bloodied hand of a young woman whose head was bandaged.

Monday is the first anniversary of the capture of Saddam by US forces after eight months on the run. At that time, US President George W. Bush said US military commanders hoped the former president's arrest would puncture guerrilla activity among his former supporters in the Sunni Arab minority.

However, violence has continued unabated and the death rate among US troops has risen since Saddam was dragged from a hole-like hole in farmland near his home town of Tikrit.

Some of Saddam's old lieutenants went on hunger strike on Saturday over access to lawyers and basis of being handed over to Iraqi after the election, their lawyers said.

The 67-year-old former president, held separately from his former aides, was not among those who were refusing meals food.

Former deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz, once Saddam's ruthless envoy to the outside world, and former vice presidents Taha Yassin Ramadan were among dozens re-

AN IRAQI girl looks out from her shelter past flames at a camp for Falluja refugees in Habaniya, near Baghdad, Dec. 12. As Iraqi Red Crescent convoy was allowed into Falluja on Saturday to deliver humanitarian supplies, but left before nightfall due to sporadic fighting between US troops and guerrillas. REUTERS

7 US Marines killed west of Baghdad

BAGHDAD—Seven US Marines were killed in two separate incidents west of Baghdad on Sunday, the US military said in a statement on Monday.

It said they were killed in Anbar province, a region which includes the violent towns of Falluja and Ramadi, but it gave no further details of the heaviest daily death toll for US troops since the end of their offensive in Fallujja a month ago.

In all, eight Marines were killed over the weekend in Anbar province, nine in Saturday and seven in the Sunday incidents.

There were sharp clashes in the east of Fallujja on Sunday and US officers say the city is still not safe enough for some 200,000 residents to return home. US jets bombed the east of the city on Sunday and residents heard sustained gunfire.

The nearby town of Ramadi remains a bastion of the insurgency, where clashes with US troops are frequent.

With the latest deaths, the number of US troops killed in action since the invasion of Iraq 21 months has risen to at least 1,013, and the total US dead to 1,299.

Nearly 10,000 American soldiers have been wounded, the majority of them seriously. Reuters

Bin Laden 'definitely' in region, says Karzai

KABUL—Afghan President Hamid Karzai said Sunday that Osama bin Laden is "definitely" in the region and will eventually be caught, even though American and Pakistani governments think the feud is cold.

"It's very difficult to say where he is hiding, the easiest he away from this region. He's definitely in this region," Karzai told CNN's Lara Logan. "We will get him sooner or later, once we see that."

Speculation on Bin Laden's whereabouts has long focused on the mountains along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the al-Qaida leader slipped away from Afghan and US forces four years ago.

Pakistan's Army has mounted a series of bloody offensives against foreign fighters near the border this year, and American forces launched a winter ground operation last week against Taliban rebels in the Afghan south.

But there has been no indication they have had any success in capturing the mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States which prompted US President George W. Bush to launch Operation Enduring Freedom with an assault on Afghanistan.

Pressed in the CNN interview, recorded Sunday in the Afghan capital, Karzai declined to say whether Bin Laden could be in Afghanistan, or in Pakistan. He said he knew of no suggestion the al-Qaida leader could be in neighboring Iran.

"But we can definitely say he's around this region and he could be ... very forever" Karzai said.

Intel Though Bin Laden remains at large, and Taliban militia continues to kill Afghan and US soldiers despite an offer of amnesty Karzai has said he is more alarmed at Afghanistan's booming opium production, which the United Nations says is turning it into a "narco-state."

On Sunday, Afghan leaders and prosecutors began considering the special courts which officials hope will begin jailing heroin and opium kingpins early next year.

US and allied counter-narcotics experts are training Afghan security forces who have already begun destroying drug stockpiles, smashing refining laboratories and arresting traffickers.

Those are also being led to punish farmers by destroying opium poppy crops in key growing regions early next year. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of dollars are earmarked to help them switch to less lucrative but legal crops.

Karzai said Afghanistan "has the potential" to be the world's biggest supplier of apples and heroin.

"I promise you, and I like that rhetoric, people and the rest of the world should know this, that we will fight poppy" he said. "We know it hurts us, it hurts you, it hurts everybody for our will fight it." AP

A COMPOSITE photo shows jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti (left) and Palestine Liberation Organization Chief Mahmoud Abbas. Barghouti announced Dec. 12 that he is withdrawing from the contest to become the next president of the Palestinian Authority, confirming his support for Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas). —AP

Gaza violence dents hopes of Mideast peace

GAZA—Israel struck back with missiles at Gaza Strip militants on Monday after five Israeli troops were killed at a resurgence of violence that has dented hopes of peace after Yasser Arafat's death.

The bloodshed stoles fated the campaign for Arafat's longtime Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, whose victory in a Jan. 9 election to replace Arafat is virtually assured after jailed uprising leader Marwan Barghouti withdrew.

Israel helicopters fired eight missiles at targets in Gaza City, striking all structures when they hit a government office building for was a second Israeli, which the Army said was used to make weapons. There were no reports of casualties.

Hours later, Israeli troops in the West Bank city of Nablus killed a gunman from Islamic militant group Hamas—one of the hardest hits on Sunday's assault on an Israeli military outpost at the border between Gaza and Egypt.

Militants have stepped up attacks in Gaza ahead of a planned Israeli withdrawal from the area, part of a 37-month uprising hoping to claim a pullout as a victory. The army aims to smash them first.

Growing violence in Gaza has dealt a blow to optimism who thought Arafat's death on Nov. 11 in a Paris hospital would usher in calm to end a four-year-old uprising and bring peace to the Middle East after decades of conflict.

Israel has said it would talk to a new Palestinian leadership if it reins in militant groups, but will otherwise carry out its plan to withdraw troops and settlers from the Gaza Strip alone.

"Our first demand to the Palestinian Authority as a preliminary stage, is to stop terror," Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Zvi Boim told Israel Radio. "Stopping terror is an evidence to more we're satisfied."

Sunday's carefully planned attack on the Israeli post was the Army's heaviest loss in seven months. Militants burrowed underneath it and cut off a 13,000-kg bomb, setting building rigs to rubble and killing five soldiers in a Bedouin Arab unit.

Israel closed the Rafah border with Egypt—the only real access to the outside world for residents of Israeli in Gaza, who are only very rarely allowed to cross into Israel.

Boim said Israel would respond to violence, but still try to ease conditions for Palestinians so that next month's presidential election goes smoothly.

Abbas, 69, was rumored a close ma after firebrand uprising leader Barghouthi pulled out on Sunday. Abbas has often condemned violence and is expected to try to revive talks with Israel that ended before the uprising blew up in 2000. Reuters

Taiwan police arrest 5 over president's shooting

TAIPEI—Taiwan police said Monday they have arrested five people for allegedly manufacturing the bullets used in the mysterious election-eve shooting of President Chen Shui-bian earlier this year.

Police seized the gang on Aug. 15 in southern Tainan county on charges of the illegal manufacture and possession of firearms, in what a top US forensic expert said was a "big rollover" step toward solving the case.

President Chen and Vice President Annette Lu were slightly wounded on March 19 when two bullets pierced their bodies as they campaigned in an open-topped jeep in southern Taiwan.

No one has yet been arrested for the shooting, which angered opposition politicians and was staged in an attempt to arouse a sympathy vote for Chen in the closing stages of the election.

Taiwanese police have previously said the bullets used in the shooting were home-made.

One of the suspects described in detail how they manufactured bullet," Hsu Wen-yi, head of the Criminal Investigation Bureau, told reporters.

"He even manufactured a bullet which was exactly the same as one of the two found in the shooting case argued ing machine mark."

The internal structure of the bullet the suspect made also matched that of the bullets hitting Chen and Lu. This said while showing a slide the police had not mentioned before.

Other evidence found against Tang was a paper police found in a search of his home on Oct. 13 that recorded the structure and specifications of bullets he made, Prosecutor Wang Jung-sen said.

"Previously he was just one of the suspects on our list. But the findings have convinced us he is the man we want," Wang said.

"Now we are almost sure he is the man who made the bullets that were used to shoot the president and the vice president," Bresciani.

But Soo said "there is still a long way to go" in solving the mystery case as the suspects said they were just asked to purchased their bullets.

However, famed US forensic expert Henry Lee, who consulted on the investigation, said the case is "almost complete" with the invitation of Taiwanese authorities, hailed the fresh development.

"At least this is a significant progress," Lee said in a interview with cable Eastern Television.

"It's like catching a needle in steam, and they did it."

EMBARRASSED by BAD BREATH?

ENTERTAINMENT Metro

Editor Louie C. Camino
Assistant Editor Brenda G. Rolando

Confessions of a 'closet' Vilmanian

By Rosario Amazon Rea
Contributor

THE SPIRIT moves me, and my PC keyboard is smashed—pun intended.

Besides, I am a closet Vilmanian.

Notice that the de rigueur "honorable Mayor of Lipa" is missing, however? Me as the film industry rubs petals on that Vilma Batista has survived her setups, added a more significant dimension to her already multilayered life, and is now steeped in governance, public service, both as city mayor and spouse to Ted, Ralph Recto. But we maintain selfish pride and remainderedly claim that she was first hooked as an actress, and consequently as a person, in this industry that we all love and remain grateful to.

I dare say that she is a good person and a good actress before she is a good mayor and public servant.

Vilma's more-or-less film and television presence is highlighted by her very stellar participation in MMFF Filipino Classic Film Festival (MMFF) every "Manoy Pi. 3," along with Christopher de Leon, Jay Manalo, the formidable Eddie Garcia, Sheryll Cruz, Aurelio, Angelica Panganiban, Angel Locsin, John Prats, Carlo Aquino, Paulo Contis, Dennis Trillo, Amy Austria, Ann Jurista, Allan Paule and myself. The last of the "Manoy Pi." series, it is directed by Joel Lamangan. The big-budget epic features an unusual love triangle set against the Filipino-Chinese subcultures and opening 45 years in China and the Philippines.

Vilma, Christopher and Jay play inseparable childhood friends who grow up and find themselves in love with the same woman, Rosalia (Angelica). Vilma's character is the rich daughter of a Filipino-Chinese businessman (Eddie Garcia) who is also a leader of the Chinese community in the Philippines. Christopher is the son of a poor fisherman (Jay) who is also a member of the Chinese community. Rosalia is the daughter of a poor Filipino fisherman (Aurelio) who is also a member of the Chinese community.

The film is a love story that spans 45 years in China and the Philippines. It is a story of love, loyalty, and betrayal. It is a story of the Chinese community in the Philippines and their struggle to maintain their culture and traditions in a foreign land. It is a story of the Filipino-Chinese community and their struggle to maintain their culture and traditions in a foreign land.

The film is a love story that spans 45 years in China and the Philippines. It is a story of love, loyalty, and betrayal. It is a story of the Chinese community in the Philippines and their struggle to maintain their culture and traditions in a foreign land. It is a story of the Filipino-Chinese community and their struggle to maintain their culture and traditions in a foreign land.

'She is the only actress I know who deserves to be called diva'

Vilma's true love is Christopher, but he wins twice of fate, he leaves the country and she marries Jay Ilar and Chinese, pine accidentally cross paths again after a long time. The complication, exacerbated mostly by computer Chinoy tradition, values and mores. How she is remarkably reached in flesh and Lamangan's adroit hands will be revealed when the MMFF week off on Dec. 25, after a nationwide parade in Manila on Christmas Eve.

A privilege

In the role of Jay's mother and Vilma's tradition-bound mother-in-law, I was privileged to direct many sequences with her. In 1971, the two of us tied for the Female Best Actress award, a first in Philippine movie history (to an end whatever and "mutual-pact" in this industry that has been kind to me). I have witnessed Vilma's metamorphosis from the "pawsorosa" and motherwife to Si, Edgar "Bebot" Mortiz's love scene versus Guy and Pip in the '70s, to "Barbuk Queen." This last one launched the reinvention of her career and discovery of her fine thespic talents under the auspices of directors Eddie Garcia, Celso Ad Castillo, Mike de Leon, Lino Brocka, Chito Roño and Ishmael Bernal. To her credentials, she considers Bernal the Pygmalion.

Forty-four years into a sterling career, Vilma has scored numerous movie-mentions not only at the box office but, more importantly, through vital and unprecedented recognition as one of the country's most important actresses in a country function to fleeting while we were filming, filmed for this movie, she was inducted as the "Movie Stronger of the Philippines." We believe she is most truly deserving of the title "actress diva," all arbitrarily bestowed on divine queen wannabes.

Vilma portrayed my daughter in an early '70s tragedy-flung Elmo Versoza love opus called "The Wonderful World of Music," which also starred Bobot. Everyone, including those who had no right to sing and dance—myself included—sang and danced in that movie.

Predictably it became a box-office hit. Nevertheless, and thankfully, the movie failed to launch Vilma's or my own singing careers.

The 'faucet'

We called Vilma "gripo" (faucet) at the time, because she could shed (bodies) of tears on the director's cue and at the sound of the clapper. Thirty years later, on the set of "Manoy Pi. 3," we still tagged her "gripo," but with a marked difference: every tear drop is internalized, monitored and restrained by her control moved to a habitual characterization and scene execution, while never reminder of ensemble acting.

This time, the tears are not her superlatives nor performance. They are layered differently, expressed by a vast gamut of emotions—anger, pain, frustration, helplessness, yearning, even joy and bliss. See how she conveys these reality, exquisitely and most effectively across the screen, with or without tears.

Vilma makes no claim to any formal training in acting. Similarly, the attribution line now widely acknowledged efficacy as a public official led to any mistake (Mil, MBA, si PhD after her name), but again to Truth and Character, a willingness to learn, to share, to listen and empathize. The last two I gleaned as we sat together on iTrain to Beijing. While she would comment with passion her multifarious experiences when asked to, Vilma likewise paused in the active listening department with flying colors. It must be the genuine and unqualified interest in people—both producer to director to actors to production staff and crew—that makes her so endearing and which, in turn, provides her with a personal repository of sources that fare her character interpretations.

Death and characters...two basic tenets of every actor worth his salt. Vilma has stretched these limits beyond her persona and celebrity to the other sources of her life: marriage, motherhood and public service. We join the multitudes who await and her deserved success in transcending those contexts.

BOOTS Amazon Rea and Vilma Santos on location for their latest movie

THE AUTHOR, second from left, with the cast of "Manoy Pi. 3"—Jay Manalo, Vilma Santos, Bella Cortes, and Christopher de Leon

'Kuya' lessons

By Pitch A. Tarroza
Contributor

LIE WAS one of the topics in the one-to-one-and-a-half hour interview with Tom Hanks and Rommel Montano in Cebu last week, but, mind, this was neither schedule or tribute to name Bonnie Hanks and Pinoy Boy service films. But mostly he figured in most of the films identified with his actor brother, Cesar Montano.

Showing up at the premiere of his brother's latest film, "Batanglay sa Bato" (Called to the Rescue), "adventure in palaro at pamilihan, Rommel's role doesn't seem cut out for show biz. He doesn't like socializing, he is unusually quiet even in the company of his famous brother and he prefers to work behind the scenes.

A fellow Visayan actor, Caridad Sanchez, fondly refers to him as "tahimik pero mahiyahin (quiet but unobserved)."

Working together in the Tom Rodrigo film based on the celebrated rape case in Cebu City and the mother of the influential rapist played by John Regala), Sanchez instantly liked Rommel. "He is a no-bar boy you would not think he is the brother of Cesar," she says. But what's like is that he has his own personality and he is quite frank and honest. That he is also good looking is a plus."

Prayerful

A father of three, the real Rommel belies his gangster image on film. His reading life's includes the Bible and books on inspiration. And he prays.

"I pray all the time. I even pray so that I can do a rape scene well," he says. "I have to pray my love, especially when I am appearing in my brother's film because he is such a perfectionist."

They are actually very close. The youngest in a brood of seven, Rommel was originally brought up by Cesar. "We were basketball buddies, we know each other's secrets, we are both into health food and stuff, and if anyone crosses him, he becomes my enemy too."

However, Cesar had little to do with Rommel's start in show biz. He was given a break in a TV show called "Super Laughs In," then debuted in some sexy-bakyaper films, the first of which was "Bodyguards."

In his brother's first Hollywood movie, "The Great Raid," Rommel also played the rapid soldiers and got the role of one of the guerillas working with a lady American doctor played by Connie Nielsen who appeared in "The Gladiator."

He auditioned three times in Australia, Los Angeles and Hong Kong, where most of his scenes were shot. "I didn't expect to make it because so many would want. But they liked my looks and after my third audition in China where most of his scenes were shot, they decided I fit the role."

Hollywood culture

It was while was King in "The Great Raid" that Rommel had a taste of Hollywood professionalism. He related: "When they say they will pick you at four in the morning, you had better be ready before that because someone will be knocking on your door at 3:55 a.m."

What he finally saw the film, his reaction was unusual. "Nagbalang kwilabotan ako (I got goosebumps)," he admits. "Cesar will tell you that I am a sentimental person and films especially those involving me and my brother. When I saw 'The Great Raid,' I got so carried away, I thanked the Lord I was part of the project."

While in Hollywood, Rommel was surprised to find out that his favorite actress, Gina Alajar, was specially liked by our American servicemen. "He told me that after watching an old film starring Gina, he thought the Filipina actress was even better than Meryl Streep."

Rommel has yet to meet Gina Alajar even in person.

It was while they were in Holly-wood that Rommel realized that foreign films making it in the American market are those celebrating their own cultures....not Hollywood copycats.

Birth of 'Panaghoy'

On one of those foreign trips, the brothers thought about doing something together straight from their home province. That was the birth of "Panaghoy," a story of village life by the river before, during and after the war." Cesar directed it himself.

Rommel is brainstormed with screenwriter Cec Benitez. "I suggested that the film should have a deeper story and that it has to be different from what Cesar usually do."

Until, when he saw the rushes of "Panaghoy," Rommel was stunned. "He finally did a film that was true to our expectations. We expect it to bring back the glory of the Visayan film and raise the consciousness and respect for things Visayan."

Best of all for Rommel, his performance in the movie reflects all that his big brother has taught him as an actor: "Don't act the part. Be the person. Don't be OA. Be natural."

NOBREL Montano: 'My big brother taught me to never 'act.'"

ENTERTAINMENT Metro

5 Mega minutes

THREE GENERATIONS. Sharon, Miel and Blaise

By Bayani S. San Diego, Correspondent

How has your life changed since Mariel?

As model I have been busier. Reading since she was born, so I am really so tied down to her schedule that I can't do much else. I love it, but there is a part of me that misses some of the things I used to be able to do freely. I can't even go on a road date because I have to be giving her boob by milk.

Has your shoe size changed?

My feet have grown bigger by half an inch.

Sleeping habits?

My baby feeds every three hours or so. Even even in the middle of the night, I have to get up.

Eating habits?

When I was pregnant, I didn't like sweets. I didn't eat much rice, either, and my cravings were weird. Also delivery. I craved sweets again. Now it has tapered off again.

Does Sesame Kiko change diapers?

No, but he plays with her in the morning, before going to work. With Frankie, he learned to change diapers when she was a little bigger. Over all, one of things I think my husband is great at is being a father.

Know you noticed anything distinctive about Miel?

She makes these sounds ... sometimes you'd think she's angry. She seems to be impatient. Sometimes we call her "Miel, ano na nga?"! She also cries louder than either of her big sisters did.

How has Frankie taken to her?

Frankie is sooooo loving toward Miel. When she comes into our room, she always asks first, "Where's my baby, Mama?" She sings to her, and asks when Miel could sleep beside her.

Do you think Her baby looks like you?

Sometimes I look at her and laugh. It's like looking at my baby pictures.

What new things have you learned as a mother? As a woman?

I haven't somewhere before that motherhood, or parenting in general, between easier with each child. I believe in a way that's true. Having you improve with each child. I'd like to have smoother ... but I don't think I can do that right away. I'm not getting any younger. I wish I could have had a whole "time" earlier on, maybe from 20 on!

Where are you coming back to work?

Dunn, I hope. I am a woman who loves to work. [but] still have a lot of weight to lose.

'Sideways' is LA critics' pick

LOS ANGELES—The Los Angeles Film Critics Association on Saturday named "Sideways," about two men searching for love in California's wine country as the year's best film, and Clint Eastwood's female boxing movie "Million Dollar Baby" as the runner-up.

The picks came two days ahead of nominations for the entirely snubbed Golden Globe Awards, which are given by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, and help narrow the list of films competing for the top Hollywood awards in the United States, the Oscars, in February.

"Sideways" earned the So. I spot in four other categories, including best director for filmmaker Alexander Payne, screenplay for Payne and Jim Taylor, supporting actress for Virginia Madsen and supporting actor for Thomas Haden Church.

Britain's Imelda Staunton was named best actress for her portrayal as an abortionist in "Vera Drake," and Irish actor Liam Neeson was handed the best actor honor for playing US ace researcher Dr. Alfred Kinsey in "Kinsey."

Thomas Jerna critics and awards voters such as those in the Los Angeles competing for the top film, year's top films, and are closely watched by voters at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which awards the Oscars.

Earlier this month, another US group, the National Board of Reviews, named "Finding Neverland," a fictional film about 19th-century author J.M. Barrie, as its best film of the year.

PAUL GIAMATTI (left) and Thomas Haden Church in "Sideways"

Supporting actress and actor honors up, respectively, were Cate Blanchett for two movies, "The Aviator" and "Coffee and Cigarettes," and Morgan Freeman for "Million Dollar Baby."

Martin Scorsese sets behind Payne for directing. Howard Hughes drama, "The Aviator," and Charlie Kaufman won in the Sex. 2 spot for Payne and Taylor for his screenplay of "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

Martin Scorsese sets behind Payne for directing. Howard Hughes drama, "The Aviator," and Charlie Kaufman won in the Sex. 2 spot for Payne and Taylor for his screenplay of "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

Other notable winners included divorce Brad Pitt for his performance for box-office smash "The Incredibles." National Board of Review pick "Born into Brothels" edged out director Michael Moore's controversial "Fahrenheit 9/11" as he the Los Angeles critics' best documentary.

The Los Angeles Film Critics Association will honor the winners of their 30th annual awards at a dinner on Jan. 13. — Reuters

American movies' greatest music

THE AMERICAN Film Institute's (AFI) network polling, "100 Years ... 100 Songs" highlighted "America's Greatest Music in the Movies," as chosen by leaders of the entertainment community, in a three-hour television event, that aired on the CBS Television Network earlier this year.

A ballot was distributed in 2003 with 400 nominated films and songs to a jury of 1,500 leaders from the film community, including film artists (directors, screenwriters, actors, editors, composers, cinematographers, etc.) critics and historians.

Only songs from feature-length American films released before Jan. 1, 2003 were considered. Voters could submit up to five votes in choices not included among the 400 nominees.

Here are the first 50:

1. "Over the Rainbow"—The Wizard of Oz (1939)
2. "As Time Goes By"—Casablanca (1942)
3. "Singin' in the Rain"—Singin' in the Rain (1952)
4. "Moon River"—Breakfast at Tiffany's (1961)
5. "What a Wonderful World"—Good Morning, Vietnam (1988)
6. "Mrs. Robinson"—The Graduate (1967)
7. "When You Wish Upon a Star"—Pinocchio (1940)
8. "The Way We Were"—The Way We Were (1973)
9. "Stayin' Alive"—Saturday Night Fever (1977)
10. "The Sound of Music"—The Sound of Music (1965)
11. "The Man (Cher Cat Away"—Arthur's Theme (1981)
12. "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend"—Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1953)
13. "Staple"—Funny Girl (1968)
14. "My Heart Will Go On"—Titanic (1997)
15. "Cheek to Cheek"—Top Hat (1935)
16. "Evergreen (Love Theme From A Star Is Born)"—A Star Is Born (1976)
17. "I Could Have Danced All Night"—My Fair Lady (1964)
18. "Cabaret"—Cabaret (1972)
19. "Some Day My Prince Will Come"—Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)
20. "Somewhere"—West Side Story (1961)
21. "Ballroom Roll"—Shall We Dance (1937)
22. "Everybody's Talkin'"—Midnight Cowboy (1969)
23. "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head"—Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969)
24. "All Man River"—Show Boat (1936)
25. "High Noon (Do Not Forsake Me, Oh My Darlin')"—High Noon (1952)
26. "The Trolley Song"—Meet Me in St. Louis (1944)
27. "Enchanted Melody"—Ghost (1990)
28. "Some Enchanted Evening"—South Pacific (1958)
29. "Born To Be Wild"—Easy Rider (1969)
30. "Singin' in the Rain"—Singin' in the Rain (1952)
31. "Theme from New York, New York"—New York, New York (1977)
32. "I Get Rhythm"—An American in Paris (1951)
33. "Papa Don't Preach"—Madonna (1986)
34. "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off"—Shall We Dance (1937)
35. "Mandy"—Mandy (1918)
36. "Singin' in the Rain"—Singin' in the Rain (1952)
37. "Swinging on a Star"—Going My Way (1944)
38. "Theme from Shaft"—Shaft (1971)
39. "Stars and Stripes Forever"—The Seven Little Foys (1955)
40. "Fight The Power"—Do The Right Thing (1989)
41. "New York, New York"—New York, New York (1949)
42. "Luck Be a Lady"—Guys and Dolls (1955)
43. "The Way You Look Tonight"—Swing Time (1936)
44. "Wind Beneath My Wings"—Beaches (1988)
45. "That's Entertainment!"—The Band Wagon (1953)
46. "Don't Rain on My Parade"—Funny Girl (1968)
47. "Sp-A-Doo-Doo-Cuh"—Song Of The South (1946)
48. "Whatever Will Be, Will Be (Que Sera, Sera)"—The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956)
49. "Make You Laugh"—Singin' in the Rain (1952)
50. "Look Around the Clock"—Blackboard Jungle (1955)

INQUIRER

OPINION

Conservation

EDITORIAL

More than a week after four typhoons struck vast parts of Luzon, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System warned that Metro Manila could have a water shortage. The MWSS said the avalanche of logs and mud triggered by the storms had severely damaged a 13-kilometer tunnel that brings water to Angat Dam from the Umiray River in General Nakar, Quezon.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said that the damage to Umiray tunnel was unprecedented. She assured the people, however, that the government was working round the clock to repair the damage. On Sunday, Malacañang again sought to allay the fears of a water shortage in Metro Manila. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the repair of the tunnel would be completed in time to avert a water crisis.

Still, the earlier statement of the MWSS should be viewed in connection with a warning made in October by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration of drier conditions for the rest of the year and slightly warmer than normal temperatures in the first half of 2005. Pagasa, in an advisory on another El Niño episode, said that the persistent warming of the atmosphere over the central equatorial Pacific Ocean had engendered. It also said an increased risk of below-normal rainfall was expected in most parts of the country in the first quarter of 2005.

Warmer temperatures will generally mean less rain, and less rain will mean less water. A hotter-than-usual dry season will also mean increased use of water in most households.

So, despite the recent recent assurances of Malacañang downplaying the threat of a water shortage, the people of the metropolis, and indeed of the rest of the country, would be well-advised to prepare for a water shortage and practice water conservation. The expected deficit in rainfall early next year will adversely affect not only the household water supply but also agriculture, hydropower generation and health and sanitation, among other sectors.

Where real estate, water is becoming a scarce and precious commodity. Because in the past water was plentiful and relatively cheap, people never worried about a possible shortage. Now, can only because of a probable water shortage but also because of the unwarranted increase in water rates, people should use water wisely and efficiently.

Now may be the time to insure that one's home is leakfree. Many houses have "hidden" water leaks. These can be detected by reading the water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the water meter reading goes up, there must be a leak somewhere. Leaking faucets must be repaired immediately. If a faucet drips at the rate of one drop per second, one can expect to waste 10,286 liters of water per year.

Aside from checking water leaks, other water conservation measures that may be taken are:

• Using a basin or washtub while doing the laundry, and using the rinse water for other purposes, such as mopping the floor.

• Turning the tap off while shaving or brushing one's teeth.

• Storing drinking water in pitchers or bottles instead of letting the tap run every time one wants a drink.

• Defrosting food overnight or hours before cooking, instead of using a lot of water to defrost it.

• Avoiding unnecessary flushing of the toilet and using water by a pail instead.

• Using a bucket and dipper instead of a hose in washing the car.

• Storing rain water in buckets for watering the plants or cleaning the car.

Right now, Malacañang officials are trying to avoid a water crisis or possible water shortage. But we can never be sure. (We can never be sure about things that concern nature; we never expected, for instance, that four successive typhoons would hit the country and produce disastrous results.)

We cannot be complacent after the government assured us that the repair of the Umiray tunnel would be completed soon. Some things can still go wrong. And the expected "worst" El Niño episode early next year could become worse. It's best to fight against a water shortage by storing water now, conserving it and making a habit of using water wisely and efficiently.

Blinders and tunnel vision

VIEWPOINT

Jose L. Mercado

(LOGS destroying our logs and much-cherished shacks. Mudslides 12 feet deep! water-tunnel for Metro Manila. "A sudden log" clogged the entrance. Into typhoon-devastated Bicol's bay, declaring Philippine Navy rescues record 139,117 ...

These million babies: by government, for only the swinging of bottles.

Have you been able to decide whether illegal loggers are the culprits agree that despite logging bans, secondary forests are still diminishing at the rate of 400 hectares daily. The dumb bill and watchdogs have worked public fury.

Unemployed workers cannot be scapegoated overnight. It takes a couple of hours to clear-cut a few acres. But some fast-growing species take years to grow. So, the next flash floods are inevitable. Postponed solutions make that a given. Most people realize that. That's a given, too.

What can be done? The answer is not hope is offered by the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Wangari Maathai, the 64-year-old environmentalist who received the award this week in Oslo. The award award her for launching the "Green Belt Movement" that planted 30 million trees since it began in 1977.

Maathai is the 12th woman (and the first from Africa) to win the peace prize since the awards started in 1901. She hosted 194 nominations, including leaders dead UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld.

In the south of Philippines the corruption, the organized thousands of groups, primarily of women, to plant trees. In the process, they've re-greened farms—and empowered citizens to demand better government.

"The environment is a very important issue when we discuss our resources that become scarce, we right over that," she told BBC. Her field can lose is citizens, not government, will reverse degradation. (It these trees mean a vi-

(Continued on Page A15)

sion and trees keep and today's multiple crises.

Time is not on our side. Writing have into the books is not enough. Mindful told CNN, And so it runs: rehabilitation is more replant. But do not have to go hammer-to-nature: "My life is my message," she said.

Barefoot statesperson Maathai sees lethal problems by road and reckless logging. Wants massive soil erosion, which will outwit future food supplies.

In China, Mongolia, Egypt, South Africa and Yemen, many crumbled to erosion engulfed grasslands. Do our leaders heed history to learn?

In Latin, wonder means to "gaze away." When time come to stopped, the real a "gestured away" and becomes vulnerable to heavy downpours. In its needs to discern, top soil—"a scarce fragile assistance that provides a foothold of life on earth"—is only seven to 25 centimeters thick in many areas.

In some Philippine uplands, topsoil depth is less than 10 cm. "At a soil depth loss rate of 0.75 cm/hr/yr, it will take only some 13 years for the topsoil to be depleted," a Food and Agriculture Organization study reveals. "If soil formation is regarded depth of 12.25 cm, as some suggested Filipino soil scientists believe, then it will take 20-31 years for the layer to be removed."

To base so much of top soil from dwarfed leaves and other vegetation takes a century or more. "Thus, unless we could can avoid next this irreplaceable and fragile cannot rebuild needed once is source."

How pork-obsessed legislators asked how much of that is valuable asset is being "mined" or lost? They should. For Genesis. Camps or Bicol are only three educated to for when to should by other provinces.

Remember, only 18 percent of forest cover is left, out of the original 91 percent in 1575. But our political leaders' time scales rarely go beyond the next elections. Two-term mayor of post-flash-flood villages.

Even before Ondoy's deluge, reports already blighted "more than half of the land area in 13 provinces," topping their capacity to feed growing populations, the Philippine Council for Agricultural Research and Development points out.

Only twenty-three percent of total forestry is being "preserved trees" are Batangas, Cebu, Davao Del. La Union, Bulacan, Bohol, Masbate, Misa Oriental, Ilocos, Rizal, Mountain Province, Capiz, Davao. 13 provinces have 50 to 90 percent of their trees eroded, says the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The worst are: Cebu—386,737 ha; Bohol—271,739 ha; Masbate—249,149 ha; Batangas—202,762 ha; and Misa—204,413 ha.

Overall, 75 percent of cropland is eroded. It's the erosion of vulnerable "slopes." In the Visayas, second half (1.12 million ha) has small scale to severe erosion. Of Mindanao's 3.16 million ha, about 1.16 million are "grassed over," but the country as a whole, some 2.19 million ha have moderate to severe erosion.

Erosion is the top cause of dreams sinking, the land to runoff or soil to destroy," says soil scientist Tif Shaheen. "It is a foreseeable ecological response to inappropriate land use and management. It can be reversed.

An army of technology or on the shelf since about 1970s—is described parts of the fill in the 1990s. Shaheen's long Bhutanese campaigns to use fallow grass to hold back the soil. In 1995, the Ramon Magsaysay Award cited Tenzing Inead the Mindless Export Bard. Life Center by Shaheen appreciated Lord Buddhism.

"You can read the dates," the Master from Gobbet once said. "You typewriter. Why can you control the signs of the times?"

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Heroes

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

journalistic darkness. Without them, our would not be relieving our light today.

Jun Cabrido I met only briefly in college. He was a student leader when most expelled for his activism. After martial law, he ran as an underground student publication, using a mimeograph-printing consensus against those in student council of his school. He was "red, engine" by the military in Mindanao in 1975. He was 20 years old then, but the Devil is short time to cruelty to the physical sense.

Ati Mosa is the other half of the Journalistic Malay tandem, the other half being her husband Armando. The first time I spoke with her was at the Second Diwa Club. She was handing over the CDs, funneled by some nobody, that Isabelo Rosales resigned and begged for his life when he was about to be executed. Nothing would be further from the truth, we said. She remembers that night. Palabrica was good enough to let her in for a drink, thinking she'd tempt her to concessions. But Palabrica did, she said he is passionate about the post as of the present. Toward the end of her days, she was still writing and discussing news things.

Lorraine Miranda I met only a few times at the National Council of Churches of the Philippines. He was a tremendous writer, one who could move the walls themselves to weep. He is now who gave the Protestant churches a new face, different from the ever-servile one they had seen throughout the late seizure. He led the "KOD" in the fight for freedoms against martial law, spearheading the IEC-D group which became that exposed its abuses. He was detained in 1974 but was released shortly later in the wake of an international outcry. He chose still he very hard to fill.

and finally, well, I wrote about Bobbit when he died last year. His son Anthony, who appreciated him at the Bantayog, is right: Bobbit had a big heart but what his heart gave out to the end. I cannot write him.

I'm just that I wish some have been added to the Wall of Remembrance. It carries two remembrance in our concept of heroes. One is that heroes are people who are so removed from us they refer to such elevated planes and are beyond the reach of us. They are like Saint Andrew Bonifacio and Apolinario Mabini, take concept positions. Well, they do. But before they did, they were ordinary mortals like you and me, who drove themselves to extraordinary heights. There is no shame or sin in that ordinary from heroes. We are ordinary mortals like you and me, who drove themselves to extraordinary heights. There is no shame or sin in that ordinary from heroes. We are ordinary mortals like you and me, who drove themselves to extraordinary heights. They are ordinary people given to the world to do extraordinary things. They are flesh and blood who know love and grief, joy and laughter.

The second is the exact opposite, which is that heroes are a dime a dozen. That isn't so only from the heroism we rightly subscribe to us the word, referring among others to sports heroes. That is so as well from the majority of the country to extraordinary heroes by 1%. The last two letters in particular had to be many self-proclaimed heroes, buoying in their wake the people who refused their lives for today's new world. The heroes never do so ridiculous as their heroines, which unfortunately is an engraved invitation to scoundrels to perpetrate their worst.

Among is the commander of our heroes simply because there will ever stop pursue to the end of time. It is left to the rest to be.

Leaving the people, as all those we used to say, it is the most rewarded. Well, honoring them is one sense reward, too.

Epilogue: In the last hour, 13 countries stood unmoving for the Dec. 26 Tsunami in Europe, to Call for the victims of the storm. Some victims are putting their weeks up for sunrise, the greatest tragic to the Philippines of its kind. My thanks to those who have offered donations. I will keep you posted on where my name to be sent for hope.

Patriotism not working

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

OUR legislators ought to take seriously the warnings of Bangko Sentral Gov. Rafael Buenaventura about the fiscal effects of a new match (yacht downgrade or sow just a downgrade of "outlook" by the various international credit rating agencies. If they don't listen to him, disaster can't be no one else they would listen to. The NEP deficit for 2005 is P175.5 billion, or 3.9 percent of gross national product (GNP). The national government's total gross borrowing in the domestic market, IOP should be getting but times the $199.4 million in portfolio investments it got this year. He warned that a credit downgrade would make things worse as it would remove IOP from the radar screens of hundreds of fund managers.

* * *

The media have endlessly reported that gaming several revenue measures to boost IOP's fiscal position is a condition for averting a downgrade. It's laughable. It's obvious that Congress will adjourn sooner this week without approving a single measure. In fact, the Pelosi is mulling calling a special session just to pass a few of them. But even with the measures, the country's still iffy and the uncertainty does not help project a picture of stability for IOP. It seems that appeals to patriotism have not worked on our lawmakers. Otherwise they would not have let the Holy Day this long and short Christmas break. I don't know whether the Christmas spirit would do the trick, especially on the senators. At least the House is poised to approve three or four measures, but these have bogged down in the Senate.

* * *

The media were invited last week to hear the results of the 13th annual survey of multinational companies (MNCs) conducted by the Wallace Business Forum. The interesting thing was that the seminar presided by various MNCs doing business here in the 2004 survey were, as WBF president Peter Wallner pointed out, "essentially unchanged" after 17 earlier surveys. For instance, the strengths of the investment climate were the same, centering mainly on its best resources, its people. Quoted on these "least problematic operating issues," the MNCs replied, in the order of importance: skilled labor availability; access to local cost of locally made cost of production; competition from local goods; and cost of labor. The MNCs rated highly the Filipino workers' education level, their English language capability, the mobility and quantity of middle management and professional people, the technical level of workers and the availability of skilled semi-skilled labor. The one bright spot was the labor aspect, where the MNCs gave them best rating in the past 10 years. In fact, for the first time, 100 percent of the companies polled said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their employees' work attitude, positive, pushing their loyalty, to the point three years, only one company with a union reported a strike. If this latter aspect, I think the Department of Labor should be credited for being unionized.

* * *

On their "most problematic operating issues," the MNCs listed developing margins, market growth rate, excessive tax rates, competitive foreign investment policies, foreign exchange rate fluctuations, local high cost of energy. Quoted on IOP's "major investment disadvantages," they listed, in the order of importance: corruption; consistency of public political instability; peace and order; tax treatment problems, and economic instability. All of which had to do with governance.

Understandably, in the MNCs' estimation, IOP's weaknesses outweighed its strengths, to that the index of investment attractiveness fell from 61.7 in 2003 to 61.3 this year. This decrease was reflected in the increase of the negative attitude of their board offices abroad toward increasing investments here. But the MNCs also gave recommendations for attracting more investments: "clear, effective and consistent policies; strong enforcement of laws; no price-jacking policy; no changing of the rules in mid-stream, and honoring and respecting contracts." They also mentioned "minimizing judicial intervention in legislative business operations."

Worthy suggestions to something that can be worked at, but as Wallner put it, why aren't the solutions being put in place? Governance involves both the executive and the legislature. Somehow, for all this point the key to IOP's fiscal recovery clearly is in hands of the legislature.

* * *

Last week, members of Maryknoll College High School Class of 1968 homecoming had a blow by blow picture that symbolized the dysfunctionality of his and bonding while raising funds for a project to help impoverished elementary schools. A classmate from New York offered to write about how he retired after 32 years in banking in order to devote his time to world work. Unfortunately, what he had not in a sailing dam. Over the next few months, 28 seniors e-mailed to one another excuses from Illinois, London, Brussels, and various US and Asian cities, chasing imminent deaths that they had to attend to. Some excuses, e.g., hurdles fought in corporate boardrooms, in local courts and in the bedchambers of their parishes. Alternately poignant, hilarious, painful and witty, they were collected and sent to me in batches (a Gmail "Speak Up, Women" sponsored by Steve and launched two months ago. It was edited by Steve York based native Manil Dolores Ramos, who describes her classmates as "fashionable outdoors, tolerant, with their minds and hearts of steel." Examples: "Five cancer deaths and illness were done by Bruce Cadiang of Ontario 2.0. For copies, call or text Hilda del Rosario, (917) 710-8466 or e-mail spokaperson@yahoo.com.

Unexplained wealth, explained poverty

GOING by some journalists' accounts, corruption in the military is an open secret. Aside from the "pahuso" given to a retiring army chief of staff which allegedly amounts to hundreds of millions of pesos, there is the "pasalubong" which is received by the high-ranking official upon assuming the position.

It is disturbing to know that although this has been happening for so long, it has been made public only recently. Why only now when military men and their families have already been pocketed by former AFP comptroller after than retired Maj. Gen. Carlos F. Garcia and his cohorts?

I can understand why fleeing down a big name and gathering evidence to substantiate an exposé is such a daunting, almost impossible task that it leaves the reporter little choice but to keep the information to himself. People in the know refuse to talk; some out of fear, and others out of indifference. It seems as if the culture of corruption has made some of us callous. Many of us do not realize that treating a blind eye on corruption is as bad as being corrupt itself.

Where you see one part of the solution, then you are part of the problem. Corruption is so rampant that we should be exempted that it does not make a strong fight if everybody is doing it.

Before he retired as Armed Forces chief of staff, Gen. Narciso Abaya proposed that the comptrollership be handled by civilians. He seemed to have forgotten that civilians can, and do, get close to military officers they work with. In the case of Garcia, he was a military officer with the noble intention of serving the country and not robbing it of its resources. It takes a man with a pure heart and a strong character to hold this post, an incorruptible soul, who can resist temptation and be firm enough to go against the tide.

Private companies and other government agencies are not free of corruption, so what difference will it make to put civilians in lieu of comptrollership? Only institutions has its bad eggs. This does not mean we cannot find means to the military whole establishment.

I believe anyone can go ahead and get rich as long as he employs honest means. There is nothing wrong with honest businessmen. Earning money is a legitimate concern. Military officials, like the rest of us, have their family's future to worry about. What is unacceptable is making money through illegal means.

Military men are not prohibited from engaging in legitimate businesses. Although they are on call 24 hours a day, that is not an excuse for wrongdoing especially in connection with the performance of their official duties. When they engage in corrupt activities they tarnish the military institution and bring dishonor upon the Filipino soldier.

To the military hardliners does not breed contempt but corruption. The chasm between the comptroller and the chief of staff makes it easy to indict funds. For instance, claims claims that all the deals conducted by J-6 during his tenure were approved by his bosses. Silas Bautista's testimony that he talked to Abaya before he received his right against self-incrimination during the hearings at the House of Representatives? Has he been arrested that if he does not spill the beans on his superiors, he can avoid being penalized heavily?

The "revolving door" policy did not extend to the comptrollership, which is obviously a vital part of the Armed Forces. Counting that Garcia acted alone, it is hard to believe that during the four years he was in the top echelon of staff based on reasons to doubt the integrity of the transactions being made there? to much for military intelligence.

Lt. Gen. Ibrea this, the new AFP chief of staff, ought to be commended for having the courage to institute reforms, beginning with the abolition of J-6. He is sticking his neck out with the plan to create four separate departments to do the tasks being performed by J-6 and putting them all under under his office. With this set-up, the supreme responsibility over the offices of comptrollership, internal audit, resources and management, and accounting. This arrangement will ensure a more rigorous system of checks and balances.

Abaya deserves praise for his willingness to serve as chief of staff at the critical juncture in the AFP's history when the first automatic election is facing many security risks.

This is a trying time for the military. This at a time when an institution that is known for instilling discipline among its members is being tested to determine whether it can instill discipline one of its own who has gone astray for its own sake (as well as its men) let us hope it will prove equal to the challenge.

Rowena La Torre, 23, is taking her master's at the Ateneo de Manila University and works as a writer for a television news program.

YOUNG BLOOD

Rowena La Torre

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their dreams? Thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the young people and will publish them. —Ed.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and level you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

Teens, sex and parenthood

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

DOZENS about sex and teenagers is like shooting "fish" in a crowded movie house, American columnist Ellen Goodman once wrote. In hazard, edging there's definitely an element of a panicked stampede for parents, who react from that visceral surrender that flusters about their children's innocence. Indeed, every parent's nightmare is to be told by one's adolescent child that she is pregnant.

But the large proportion of teen pregnancy is unwillingly parents know that there is no way they can monitor their child's every move and be entirely responsible for his or her behavior; a child's hormonal mother/bond or fatherhood still remains overwhelmingly the province of guilt, fear and self-recrimination. Indeed, in this case, the "sins" of the children visited upon the parents.

The current talk of the town, or at least of the segment that takes those business going seriously, is the pregnancy of Sen. Jinggoy Estrada's 17-year-old daughter, with the acknowledged father being Jason Revilla, himself an actor, as the "culprit."

What struck me about the interviews with both Jinggoy and Lani Mercado, mother of the father-to-be, was that, while Pacos was all calm assurance and support for her daughter, it was Mercado who was doubting tears and expressing remorse and regret at her son's early fatherhood.

Jinggoy, on the other hand, was more rational and practical in his reactions. Usually, teen age pregnancy is seen as primarily the girl's — and the girl's parents' — problem. It is the girl and her parents who must bear the greater share of the emotional and even physical pain of motherhood. It is the girl who must submit to through nine months of pregnancy and bouts of labor (and giant her pride, who must put her life on the line as well), it is also she who bears much of the disgrace, blame and sacrifice.

* * *

Of the others have not heard parents of boys disclose, for instance, that they have nothing to worry about their sons' sex education since they have "told and told" the sons getting pregnant" (as if pregnancy were the only consequence of sexual, unprotected sex.

And how often does it happen that when a pair of high school students confront an unwanted pregnancy, it is the girl who must stop schooling and even go into hiding, while the boy continues with his usual activities, like nothing happened? The argument of schoolyard friends is that a pregnant teen avoiding the halls of school is a constant "bad example" to other students, who might be tempted to emulate her. But what if the young father? Is he not, by blithely carrying on as if he didn't face such and serious responsibilities, also setting a "bad example" to his peers?

Indeed, like in the case with the young celebrities. It was Bacos' daughter who had to stop going to school, hurting her friends and classmates were gossiping about her. The young Revilla, as far as I know, continued with his usual activities. It was Lani Mercado, appearing on TV, the tearjerkers revealed, his parents even requested Bacos to keep her daughter away from public view, mainly to protect the young Revilla's budding acting career.

* * *

I (D) agree with Lani Mercado that it is still "wrong" and worrying for two adolescents to be raising on the responsibilities of parenthood at so early an age (both for son and Bacos' daughter are in the parents as 16).

But I must publicly admit, in same way by Susanna Bacos' attitude — or at least the demeanor she displayed on "The Buzz" — that neither she nor her daughter had anything to be ashamed of. Indeed, she chose to face the unfolding turmoil of her grandson as a blessing, a gift, even.

Still, I noted that neither Bacos nor Mercado, nor any of the hosts of "The Buzz" gave five to teenage contraceptives, or the need for sexually active young people to protect themselves from the unwanted consequences of early sexual activity. Is it that the celebrity parents are so morally (naive, mixed intention, or heartbreak — on their part on their parents' what all, such a situation need not have come to pass. While there is much to be said against 13-year olds engaging in sex, the 40-and-50-year olds have to realize that they are also implicated, unwanted pregnancy — and its consequences such as the interrupted schooling of the mother and the tapped in the bad career of the father — if only the young people had known about and resorted to contraceptives.

* * *

ALONGSIDE this bit of sizzling shame-big gossip are news bits about young mothers, most of them poor and ignorant, facing charges for infanticide or killing or abuse of the child (to their hands.

One mother expressed "shock" when, while sitting on a toilet seat after suffering stomach pains, she found a baby shooting out from her vagina. She did the unmentionable: she flushed her baby down the toilet bowl. Then, when the baby cried, she ran to the bathroom to quiet the infant before it landed head-first in the toilet and then, hearing the baby cried, she ran to the stall to put a plastic bag.

The situation would have been very much worse if not for the clueless young mother as typical of young Filipinos, who surveys show muddle-along with little knowledge about sex and sexuality, given our reticence about such matters and the paucity of sexual guidelines who feel with the media. It would be a great service of the prosecutor's Women and Children desk to charge the mothers of verified ignorance, too, will be putting at risk even more such young mothers and their innocent, blameless offspring.

The Black Dahlia revisited

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Randy I. Harper

MURDER mystery buffs would know and recognize immediately who, what and where the Black Dahlia case is all about. It's one of those murders Los Angeles' noir mysteries that everyone has his favorite theory about and that to us beloved of fans of mystery writers "Chinatown" or the films Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald. Unfortunately Joseph Wambaugh has even made a documentary on the case. Another favorite of "noir" fans is James Ellroy who wrote a 1987 book, "The Black Dahlia," which was the first in a trilogy of her father who now supports a new theory.

The name of the murdered girl was Elizabeth Short. She came to LA in 1943 from Massachusetts, another young woman with star lust in her eyes and dreams in her head. She came to LA to grow her fun and set of screen in. For it to be repeated another to tell the a hard to believe.

Hats off Ellroy and now Connolly ("The Concrete Blond," "City of Bones," "Mad Woods, vol.) all know that LA is about the lure, glamor the modern. San Francisco isn't bad for ambience either, but LA is much better with its black echoes of crime and noir and lost hopes. Elizabeth or Betty, all of 22, later nicknamed the Black Dahlia, was found dead in a deserted lot on Leimert Park at the corner of 39th Street and Norton Avenue on Jan. 15, 1947. Her body was cut up in two parts and left 10 inch- es from the sidewalk. She'd been surgically bisected at the waist and drained of blood, washed clean and posed.

Here some news you top called Steve Hodel who's written a national bestseller, a 481-page opus, "Black Dahlia Avenger: A Genius for Murder," where he accuses his own father of being the murderer.

He George Hodel was a doctor with connections to corrupt cops and the city's powerful because of detailed files he kept on his downtown practice. Hodel was also a pervert who performed illegal abortion ring catering to the elite. He died of the age of 91 in San Francisco and his son Steve found among his father's private photo album two photographs of a woman he believes to be the Black Dahlia, apparently his dad had a real affinity for the bad daughters of girlfriends, married three and bothered 11 children.

The original director of the victim made it plausible that the killer was a doctor because no knives were around. There were actually 50 people who confessed to the killing and the police at the time even interrogated Orson Welles, a mystery silliest, surely because he did a magic act where he cut a woman in half.

Actually Dr. Hodel had been one of the suspects but sadly enough, the 12 standing room that the killer was police and that Dahlia was under the prosecutor his son's accusation have disappeared from the file. So a matter of fact it seems that almost all the physical evidence has disappeared. LA County prosecutor Stephen Kay finds it shocking that key physical evidence has disappeared from the file and affirmed the name of the killer appear to have the same handwriting as the doctor's.

But the case will never be closed since months has no statute of limitation. The case was actually investigated by the LAPD and the DA's office reviewed over scores of its files to the LAPD, including a photograph of Dr. Hodel and even transcripts of conversations recorded inside his house, initiating one from Feb. 18, 1950 where he says: "Imagine! I did it and the Black Dahlia and they can't prove it now. They can't talk to my secretary anymore because she's dead." The secretary is found to 1945 as a suicide and police suspect that the doctor might have killed her.

The recordings are interesting in that a woman is heard crying as she tries to call the operation. There are also sounds of slapping and a shouting: "Stop it, please." They set up the recordings? And why didn't they bring him in for questioning?

In Hodel was an ordinary man. He had an I.Q. of 186, entered California at 15 but was expelled for having behaved a child with a family member's help. He was also included being a voyeur reported by the Los Angeles Herald, a magazine publisher, a radio announcer, a medical student, a doctor and chief assistant district attorney for the Los Angeles County. He also drank, used hashish and cocaine and was a member of the Communist Party. He also had a good friend in photographer Man. Ray. Both befriended by Hodel were subsequent conversations.

Steve Hodel believes his father murdered several women. According to the IRS files, Steve says, his father was a CIA agent in Germany. Another girlfriend claimed she had seen her in his house.

Steve comes the entertaining part for us. In 1950, George Hodel left LA for Hawaii where he married a third wife and divorced his children and established himself as a successful realtor researches with a new family and four children. Just think if you had been his next door neighbor or a colleague? Or a girl with long black hair in your home? He returned to the US after 40 years, moving to San Francisco in 1990.

The question is, if he was the killer why did he tell the Black Dahlia and who else (aside from his secretary) did he kill?

* * *

Comments to hunterharper@yahoo.com.

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Unrestrained voices of truth

LETTERS

TODAY are at present 141 political prisoners in the Philippines. Their crimes—they brought light to the lives of impoverished people, demanded the words from the powerful and helped the voiceless to shatter their silence. In fact, their stories have dispelled an illusion, showing the world what we really have—a democracy that thrives on short lies. This reminds me of the story of Peter Rabbit's "Tar Tale."

It's an illuminating story where the main character woke up one day to find himself the purpose of a trial. He doesn't know his crime. In fact, neither does anyone—from the arresting officers to the court officials, including the judge. All they know is that if he is under trial, he must be guilty of something. Until the end of the story, the main character never gets to know what his crime is, and he himself gets to be curious about his compatriots.

The cases of the political prisoners is not that Kafka's "The Trial" is still happening in real life. But more than this, the story touches our lives and is a grim reminder of the repression and injustice paradoxically happening beneath the sanctioned orality of a timeless society.

Like the main character in The Trial, the political prisoners are accused of crimes. What crimes? Their crimes are that they fought with his and friends who would not let the truth die with them and for the common people who raised their fists to fight for their rights. Their crimes, like that of the late Ninoy Aquino and now Dodong, are that they defended the people from state repression, they tried to remove the yoke of injustice from our people's shoulders, and they fought for social change.

In the political prisoners, we find men and women who bear witness to repression, tenacious and humanistic, and out of conviction when they thought the world could not see. Many imprisoned, their voices of truth echo more loudly, unintentional even to prison walls. Their aspirations for justice and social change will definitely live forever in our midst.

—HERBERT M. BUDLA,
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Resignation would be an honorable act

LABOR Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Cuzzat's forensic sophistication to get his boss, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, off the hook over the use of SPF personnel in the gory dispersal of pickets in the sugar demolition (Inclinado Luisa massacre, 1974, 13-14) have only hurled the embattled labor secretary deeper into the quagmire.

To justify his least notion of calling on the Armed Forces of the Philippines to perform the manifestly civilian function of crowd control, Cuzzat tried a parsimonious ploy by invoking Article 263(g) of the "Unless requested by the President or personally by the chairman of the National Police Commission upon consultation with the Secretary of Labor and Employment or when requested by the Labor personnel from the armed forces should not intervene or be utilized in any labor dispute."

Anybody with a modicum knowledge of the English language will say that the above provision gives the power to utilize AFP personnel during labor disputes to only two officials: the President, and the chairman of the NAPOLCOM. The labor secretary may be considered by those two officials on the matter. But they also have to be done to make the call for the intervention of AFP personnel. There is nothing in the above quoted provision, however, allowing her to directly order such AFP utilization on her own discretion.

There is also the 1987 Constitution to consider. The Constitution gives the President—not the labor secretary—the power to call on the armed forces, as its commander in chief, to prevent or suppress lawlessness, violence, invasion or rebellion. While the Labor Code authorizes the labor secretary to seek the assistance of law enforcement agencies to ensure compliance with her orders during strikes and lockouts, this can clearly refer to the Philippine National Police which is trained in crowd management and control, unlike the AFP personnel whose orientation is primarily for combat and warfare.

Cuzzat was quick to imply that the presidents' order to illegal evict the labor secretary, who presided over the Hacienda strike, has yet to rule on this issue. In the utter ego of Sto. Tomas, Cuzzat is presumed to speak for his boss. Given the obvious prejudgment, it would do well for Sto. Tomas to refrain herself from the case.

On the other hand, valedictor on was the labor secretary was legally authorized to call on the AFP alone was thrown from the fact that her decision to make use of AFP personnel in the Hacienda Luisita dispersal led to the death of a number of workers and picketers and the injury of others more. So element of legal justification from the labor secretary and her lackeys would bring back to life the strikers and pickets who unreasonably perished in the machinelike combat carnage.

Even such a situation, there is only one honorable thing for the labor secretary to do: resign.

EDMUNDO S. SALLADO JR.,
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Total deforestation of upland areas by 2005

THEY joins the nation and all concerned agencies in executing assistance to all victims of devastated campaign by the latest typhoons especially in Bicol, Samar, Quezon and Nueva Ecija. Your calls or to members nationwide to send relief goods to the Regus office at 123 E. Lopez Bus. Valenzuela Village, Quezon City. You can also send at contact Rey at (02)7430807 or Bob at 09178223637.

Think, however, deplores the continued inaction of government against industrialists' big-time logging in critical areas of the country, such as, Isarog, Quezon, Quirino, Isabela, Samar Island, Agusan, Surigao del Sur and Sulu-Zamboanga del Norte.

Reasons of landslides and easygoing

waters from the mountains to have since swept tons of logs on from the forests, destroying the crops, destruction of some of the country's remaining scenic shrub and old growth forests.

Studies reveal that the rate of deforestation of our forests at 1,000 hectares (4,000 acres) a day, will likely completely denude by 2010 our upland areas, resulting in disasters and loss of lives far more than what happened in Ormoc and floods in Quezon.

Think calls on the government to strengthen laws against indiscriminate big-time logging, enact appropriate and useful forestry laws, enforce current policies on illegal logging and prosecute arrest, encourage community participation in guarding the forest, and in prosecuting illegal logging operations perpetrated even without forestry laws.

Think also calls on Environment Secretary Michael Defensor to initiate action against big-time logging in such revised watershed areas, including, against some officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources who may have been in collusion with illegal loggers. The logs and timber that were carried by the floodwaters should be allowed to victims of the disaster who have their houses.

—ARSENIO SALAZAR JR., chair, Think,
alumni Center, University of the
Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City

Chauffeured nuns and priests

ALLOW me a brief reminder on a couple of points raised by "running priest" Fr. Robert Reyes (Letters, 12/09/04). It should be pointed out to Father Reyes that GMA president Winston Garcia was driven any car he wants and live in any house he chooses as long as he does not steal money or buy them.

I understand that Garcia took out loans to buy the car and build the house. How, since when did butt-saving (kotse) become illegal or immoral? Also, what's wrong if the mother of Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes mistreated her money as her son, since she can no longer manage them in her twilight years?

I find it more reassuring that many priests and nuns live quietly—unaffected and resisting detractors or like-thing experiences—to tolerance of their vow of poverty.

Father Reyes should be more circumspect before passing judgments on people. Being a man of the cloth, he should know that he will be judged according to the manner he judges other people.

—RENATO VILLARUZ, T.O.F. Tahid St.,
United Hills Village 1, Mandaluyong City

They will remain rice terraces

I write in reference to the Nov. 28 column at account of the incident, deploring the Banaue Rice Terraces named into "hand. pana-terraces."

The controversy triggered by the bill of our very own Rep. Salvador Clemente, proposing to legalize the production of marijuana in the country, but brought the issue into the limelight once again.

While the illegal officials do not have a unified stand on the proposed marijuana legalization bill, we would like to bring to your attention that we, here in the mountains of Ifugao, feel humiliated by the opinion.

And as it has been, the Ifugao farmers have overwhelmingly maintained the resistance by generations with extensive cultivation—if there has been an effort, this government. This is due mainly to the fact that we still witness the planting and harvesting of farmers of their traditional rice varieties. The violence still here despite the odds we face.

And this is so because we respect the principles of our great Ifugao ancestors who, on their own ingenuity and free will, transformed—with only primitive tools and their bare hands—the rugged, harsh and steep mountains that served as their home into productive and beautiful rice terraces. For us, the rice terraces are a monument of the Ifugao's creative will to survive in a hostile environment.

While we do not deny the existence of marijuana in Ifugao, we can say that there are no marijuana plantations in the mountains. Marijuana is usually propagated in remote areas but not in the Banaue Rice Terraces or in any of the rice terraces in the province.

Our people are hard up, feeling the pangs of an evident indigence. We may belong to the poorest provinces, but we have never committed the disgrace of planting the rice terraces with marijuana.

We would like to assure the people of the Philippines that we, the Ifugao people, are different from the Ifugao rice terraces—the Ifugao's legacy to the world—shall protect our heritage. Whether marijuana is legalized or not, we will never turn our cherished rice terraces into marijuana plantations. Your reassurance is our assurance and to our children.

—CLEMCIO PRESBITERO III,
provincial vice governor,
Province of Ifugao, Lagawe, Ifugao

InqBox

Dear Readers, Sent in your comments, suggestions and views on today's issues or how it was delivered. Tell us about the news you are interested in and the things you need improved in your favorite newspaper. Text BROADSH <section key, media name, village/barangay and send to 180-(Smart) or 2200 (Globe). The section keywords are indicated in the bags of each section.

Do you think commercial logging should be totally banned? Why or why not?

No, not yet a the time being. Let there be another storm and let the lessons of the immediate people (not congress) be hit by gigantic logs.
—Rosario Madrid, ate manila, inquirer

commercial logging should not be totally banned. I guess we are not engaging partnership ng mga politiko and gov officials?
—Leymhan Lamoste, Quezon, Manila

commercial logging should be banned because despite the [illegible] all the desperate measures! Illegal logging or selective ban will only flatten pockets of corrupt officials.
—mauro que, manila

commercial or not, it's still logging. Total log ban and nothing else!
—Melina lopez, davao city

oh, boy! if we totally ban commercial logging there a lot of businesses will shut down and thousands will lose their jobs.
— lolo edcel d. arcang, bayawan city

Both legal and illegal logging which is hard caped our forests should now be stopped totally.
—Ruel Bernardo Varela, iloilo, Zamboanga

No! Commercial logging should be totally banned, it have some. Only if cases of exploiting forest is strong sanction.
—Antonio Ragadiod, Antipolo City

[illegible] ang ilang operation ng gobyerno ang nagpatanggal ng illegal logging at isa pa, dahil sa kapabayaan ng mga [illegible].
—Shaina Dumlao, General Santos City

yes, ban logging totally for the next 10yrs for replenishment of our forests, let stone dr ingest values are not a bargain.
—josephine sotiado, marikina city

no. Because people who have connections to them will always do something to order to gain money for their needs.
—shirlee ily, tagaytay city

YES to a total log ban! Mindanao, Cebu has come after logging concessions ended around 2 years! The land had left, it FORESTS to event partly BEHOLDS. people are affected.
—Carmen Delfin, davao

No. Commercial logging is a source of livelihood for many Filipinos. The government should just have stricter rules, and stick to them.
—Gail Gamolmon Ong, Bacolod City

Regulated logging shall is allowed 2 small enterprise endgered species.
—amelia cipegas, barangay, Eastern Samar

No. It should only b selective. 2 do some home projects forest plantations, day-have (might 1 harvest) retain day have seam.
— jorie abat, zamboanga city

NOT totally BAN. cgpm controlled logging can we need wood, if no PGB have doing it seen we cut trees, it shall be replaced by planting again.
—Brimadeo Tandoc, Urdaneta city

yes i agree to a total log ban, logging will cause soil erosion & floods, like what happened to leyte before, and now, to parts of davao. kawawa ang mga mamayan sa...
—ralph donson, davao city

yes, a ban will encourage bulibot-ans to plant trees and become the suppliers to save woods and to the future.
—rolly jo lumayag, baybay/davao city

stupid lang! May illegal logging na man. bakit common ila logging pa? I hate it see this by report it stupid!
—Andrea mendiola, sagayan de oro city

It depends on the economic officials. If they are sincere.
—Edwin G. Agbayan, Ifugao City

yes! we have if ban logging totally, or we will all be affected and of a loss of the Earth. STOP it WOW. I WANT to GET OFF is the top of Sky.
—ethan Guevara, unknown city

Biblical: logging until few enactment of a viable, UNWORKABLE plan that covers both economic & ecological environmental parameters.
—ernie lacuna, QC

YES! what we are doing 2 d and it is reflected in our beings. If mother nature is sick, so are we also the entire but
—ethel Sandrin, unknown city

Across the NATION

Exec's kin seek honors for hero cop

COTABATO CITY—The family of a slain Magindanao official wants the Philippine National Police to recommend a policeman here, who tried to rescue the victim after being shot Sunday by still unidentified armed men.

Noting that the local Muslim community had not been informed on the arrests of victims of shooting, chief insp. Abdulwahid Pendatun, city police chief, admitted that OIC Bashar Kasan's arrest was something "totally new to [us] but happened here in decades."

Datimg Magindanao acting Mayor Sinsuat Pikitbuluang was driving his family home after dinner in a local restaurant here when four motorcycle-riding men ambushed the pickup truck they were riding in.

Sinsuat's son, Rudjy Mitra managed to grab her husband's 9-millimeter automatic pistol and fire at the motorcycle-riders, an incident Rudjy Mitra says also slightly wounded to the cheek.

It was the hour of gunfire, Kasan said, that called his attention from the ceremonies marking the eighth Pit Omega fraternity and sorority of which he is member.

Pendatunan and Kasan rushed Sinsuat to the Notre Dame Hospital here, saving the victim's life, reports Norb Maulana, PDI Mindanao bureau chief.

Foresters charge phone firm exec with cutting 200 trees

ILIGAN DEL NORTE, Naces Vizcaya—Environment officials here have accused an executive of a telecommunications firm of allegedly illegally cutting 123 trees in a forest zone in upland Kaulba town.

Forester Bernardo Villador, community environment officer, recommended the filing of charges against Josefina San Luis, area acquisition specialist of Globe Telecom.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources personnel recovered some 5,000 board feet of timber and tree saplings along a cleared and leveling in a proposed cellsite station at Barangay Mandong in Kaulba.

The DENR filed the suit after Globe Telecom defied a Sept. 13 warning to cease destroying the area and to get a cutting permit.

We cannot afford another environmental disaster," Villador said.

The cut timber was being used as construction materials for the cellsite station.

Globe Telecom was being asked to pay the government P40,000 as forest charges and for environmental damages, Villador said.

The impression is that he failed to reach the [illegible]

Luis. Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

NO TO CASINO IN BINONDO

An Open Letter to Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo

"It is not the question of what is legal, it is a question of what is morally upright and morally sound."-PGMA

The Kilusan Kontra Sugalan urgently appeals to you, Madam President, to immediately stop the operation of the casino at the Binondo Suites situated at the corner of Sabino Padilla and Ongpin Streets, Binondo, City of Manila.

Last November 28, 2004, PAGCOR had a "soft-opening" of the casino, despite vehement protest by all the important organizations in the Chinese-Filipino community, the nationwide Chinese Catholic apostolate, and the Sta. Cruz Parish.

We have made known to Pagcor and to the Binondo Suites, our firm and non-negotiable stand against organized gambling in any guise or form - whether slot machine arcades, gaming parlors, e-casinos, internet gaming and the like - in the Binondo and Sta. Cruz areas.

The grounds for our objection to the casino are many and have been effectively brought to the attention of both the Pagcor and Binondo Suites. The bottomline is: we do not want such a historic and symbolic place as Binondo, the heart of the Chinese-Filipino community for generations, to be polluted by organized gambling and to suffer from all its evil consequences.

For this reason, we urge your Excellency to take action NOW and stop the operation of the casino at the Binondo Suites, even if euphemistically called a VIP Club. That they have since supposedly closed the casino again a few days ago is also immaterial, we want the slot machines completely pulled out so there will be no doubt as to whether it is operational or not.

We appeal to you to maintain the Binondo and Sta. Cruz areas free of any form of organized gambling. Your office has that power and must use that power for the common good. Your legacy to the Filipinos must be upheld.

Now is the time to take action and restore the people's confidence in the moral vision of your administration.

KILUSAN KONTRA SUGALAN
December 7, 2004

SIGNATORIES:

1. Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc.
2. Chinese-Filipino Business Club Inc.
3. Association of Chinese-Filipino Schools in the Philippines
4. Youth Fraternity Association of the Philippines, Inc.
5. Filipino-Chinese Amateur Athletic Federation
6. Confederation of Filipino-Chinese Associations of the Philippines, Inc.
7. Association of Philippine-Fukienese Fire Brigades, Inc.
8. Alumni Association of Philippine-Chinese High Schools and Fire Fighters of the Philippines Inc.
9. Filipino-Chinese Physician's Association, Inc.
10. Philippine Federation of Filipino-Chinese Associations, Inc.
11. Sto. Cristo Parish
12. Bahay Pag-Asa Foundation, Inc.
13. Migrant Ministry
14. Dongan Christian
15. Binondo Area

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS BY ALPHABETICAL ORDER:

NPA launches 2nd offensive in 3 days

MEXICO, Pampanga—For the second time in three days, New People's Army rebels attacked a government military intelligence safehouse in Barangay Dinalungang here on Sunday.

No one was reported killed in the attack by at least 20 rebels but several firearms were reportedly seized.

The 300th Palaynon Division Command, which owned up the attack on Monday, said the raid was staged weeks after local officials received complaints on the presence of government soldiers in the town's eastern villages.

The rebels seized three M-16 rifles, an M-203 grenade launcher, two computers, two cell phones, a global positioning system unit and uniforms of soldiers stationed in the tactical command post of the 69th Infantry Battalion, the Northern Luzon Command said in a statement.

Of the 20 rebels, four were Army uniforms and patches of the 69th IB, the unit assigned to Barangay Sta Ines, the statement said.

At gunpoint, two soldiers were locked in the toilet. They were left unhurt.

The rebels fled to Sta. Ana town, east of Mexico, on board a van. The attack took less than 20 minutes, according to a worker in the command post.

The raid was the second in three days following an NPA announcement that it would ostensibly retaliate to avenge the death of Datan's farm leader Marcelino Beltran.

Beltran was supposedly one of the witnesses to the shooting of policemen by soldiers in a checkpoint in Barangay Dinalungan here on October 28 that left one policeman dead and another wounded.

The rebels vowed to make the perpetrators of Beltran's murder pay and said his killing was connected to the Lanzia labor conflict.

On Friday, the NPA carried a police detachment in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija, to exact what it called "the offensive against the escalating use of state terrorism on the Filipino people." *Inquirer Northern Luzon Bureau, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Case vs fotog slay suspect filed in court

CEBU CITY—The city prosecutor's office here yesterday elevated to the regional trial court the murder charges against the alleged gunman in the killing of photojournalist Allan Dizon.

Cebu City Prosecutor Cesar Tejadenga approved the resolution of assistant City Prosecutor Edilberto Donasco who found probable cause to indict Edgar Belandres for Dizon's murder.

Aside from the murder complaint, Belandres, 30, is also facing charges of violating the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act, which was others identified as Mariano Villarin and Candresio Penales.

The three were arrested on Dec. 6 after policemen allegedly caught them holding a pot session inside Belandres' house at Sitio Iton Tres in Barangay Lorega this city.

The prosecutor's office recommended no bail for murder charges and P40,000 for the charges of possession of illegal drug paraphernalia.

The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in Central Visayas (CIDG-7) filed a murder complaint against Belandres after two witnesses identified him as the one who shot Dizon dead on the street outside ESE City here on Nov. 27.

Dizon, 30 and a photographer of the Primera Newspaper, was the 12th journalist killed this year and the 61st since 1986, based on the records compiled by the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines.

Enemesa told the Inquirer that he based his conclusion on the evidence presented by the CIDG, which included the affidavits of their witnesses.

"Based on the evidence presented to us there is sufficient basis to file the case in court. There are at least two witnesses who identified the suspect," he said. *Jedeza M. Baldemor, PDI Visayas Bureau*

BRAINS Training and Review

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Rizal, 10th place

David Alcaide, Jr.
Aklanon, 9th place

Cresmar Gavilanes Cruz
Of Olivar, 5th place

Arjames Baldoa
Of Olivar, 10th place

Ms. Leslie Anne Abaloyan, Ms Angelique Allarde, Geomedick Baesones, Boly Bungag, Virgo Mariegay Cabcat, Vincent Cabrillas, Cheryl Cambal, Lino Capistrano, Liza Anne Diane Cantio, Boni Clark Chua Go, Francis Leo de Castro, Ferdinand de Guzman, Walter Michael Escalio, Kathleys Fabiola, Jay Vanessa Guillermo, Gilbert Hamora, Jessa Lisangan, Jayne Merill, Julius Zello Oliveros, Araceli Palaoan, Janine Petal-ir, Ann Lourdes Pelpeño, Edelyn Rivi, Ms. Cadhrea Reyes, Neil Kenneth Savin, Grace Ruth Salamat, Riza Carla Tanguilig, Rhiane Rose Zata.

From the Management, Faculty, and Staff of: BRAINS CHEMICAL ENGINEERING BOARDS REVIEW

Tanong ng Bayan ABC

Text 2910

Buwis sa yosi at alak, dapat bang taasan?

AWIT NG PAG-ASA

Mula sa mga batang kapos-palad, pang-international na musika at sining

INQ INQ TV TV

Sa Inquirer Pinoy: BISIKLETA NG PAGASA

Making great things possible Globe

Sunday Inquirer: MGA ANGHEL SA LUPA

Sa Tanong ng Bayan: BUWIS SA YOSI AT ALAK, DAPAT BANG TAASAN?

Ating kabalitaan **Cheri Mercado**
Ngayong Huwebes, 10:00 N.G. sa ABC

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INQUIRER

Mayors of Bulacan towns deny diverting educational funds

CITY OF MALOLOS—Bulacan mayors have denied diverting their towns' special education fund contributions to their campaigns in vote in the May 10 elections.

The alleged diversion has delayed the payment of salaries of teachers hired by the provincial government.

Mayor Eddy Ejale from Hagonoy, one of 20 towns identified by the provincial government that failed to remit their contributions, said no misuse of government fund was used in the mayors' election campaigns.

Earlier, Gov. Josefina de la Cruz blamed the mayors for the failure of the students to receive their salaries on time. She said at least 1.8 towns have yet to remit P68 million from their real property tax collections.

The governor also was forced to identify the town mayors to suspend them to remit the towns' shares to the provincial government's office as the provincial government could pay the teachers' salaries for November and December.

The mayors reportedly confessed with the municipal treasurers in not remitting the towns' education fund contribution to finance their campaign expenses.

The provincial public affairs office also identified the towns as Mayors-concern, San Ildefonso, San Miguel, Bustos, Hagonoy, Bocaue, Norzagaray, Labangan, Plaridel and Guiguinto.

While denying that he could not speak for the other mayors, Ejale said there could be some delays in the remittance but there could never be any irregularity in the towns' contribution to the fund.

He said Mayor Ambrosio Cruz of Calumpit vowed to complete the payments before the end of the month.

During the campaign, De la Cruz was criticized for misuse of the funds, like has denied the accusations. Germelo Reyes, PIA Central Luzon Desk

Gov't firm still owner of NLEx franchise

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Philippine Construction Corp., the consortium that rehabilitated the 84-km-long Manila North Tollways Corp., which rehabilitated the 84-km-long Luzon Expressway, has become and still can operate regime in Metro Manila.

"The PNCC is a shareholder of the MNTC," MNTC vice president for public relations Marlene Ochoa said.

Aside from the PNCC, the said firm is the joint venture for the Luzon Development Bank, Philippine Infrastructure Development Corp., Group Epic of France and Leighton International of Australia.

Ochoa issued the statement after Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) spokesman Celso Rafili questioned why the PNCC allowed the MNTC to take over the management of the NLEx when the former's franchise was to end in 2009.

Rafili said only Congress could amend the franchise given under Presidential Decrees 1112 and 1113, issued by the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos.

"PNCC declared that it alone could not raise the funding required to rehabilitate such a massive project (of rehabilitating the 30-year-old road)," ex-President Fidel Ramos, in 1994, invited the Lopezes to partner with the PNCC," Ochoa said.

Co-owner

"It was not necessary for PNCC to give up its franchise because PNCC is a co-owner of the MNTC."

Under the project's supplemental toll agreement between MNTC and the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB), MNTC was given a 30-year extension or until 2030. The TRB, in a recent ruling to MNTC reports, was approved by Ramos in 1998 and reviewed by the Department of Justice (DOJ) in 2000 and 2002.

This, the MNTC said, "accorded to the legal soundness and enforceability of the ITOA."

The project, which originally cost P13 billion, amounted to P16.3 billion after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which the business and non-governmental organizations assist the government to use as a subsidy for the new toll rates that are deemed high amid the economic crisis.

Under the rates that have been pegged at P2.49 per km for cars, P6.23 for buses and light trucks and P7.47 for heavy vehicles.

More increases

MNTC president Jose de Ayen said an additional increase of "a few centavos" is expected when MNTC takes over either in late December or early January.

The Dec. 15 deadline has not been set for the MNTC, but yet to receive its certificate of information, tax compliance and supply for new toll rates.

The delay came as MNTC assured that Leighton should redo some segments that were found "to have fallen below MNTC's strict quality standards," Ochoa said.

The provincial board of Pampanga is investigating the toll increase amid charges that it was "railroaded." Tarsicio Quijano, PIA Central Luzon Desk

Quezon folk mourn deaths, forest loss

LUCBAN CITY—At least 3,000 people marched on this city's streets to mourn the deaths brought by landslides and floods, walking in one in silence to also protest ecological destruction which they blamed for the tragedy.

Students, members of religious groups, professionals, farmers, workers and environmental personalities advocates were black shirts or a sign of mourning for their dead provincial mates and protest against continued logging in Quezon.

"We silently mourn the death of our province mates in northern Quezon. This is a time for prayer and meditation," said Fr. Rodolfo Aquino, dean of the Kapatiran at Aksyunang Alay sa Kamalayang Batas-Quezon, the biggest coalition of different multi-sectoral groups in the province.

"But our silence does not mean that the culprits behind all these evil deeds will remain free. The government officials behind all these should be held liable for the great tragedy that resulted in the death of countless helpless people."

The group ended up at the doorsteps of the office of Quezon Gov. Wilfredo Enverga in front of the provincial capitol building.

They placed a mock coffin in front of the governor's office and prayed.

They proceeded to the session hall of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan to continue praying.

Members urged Enverga to resign for his regular "absenteeism" every time calamities visited the province.

"We were nowhere to be found several days after the tragedy struck southern Quezon. He just appeared three days after, in time for President Macapagal's visit to the disaster area," the natives point out.

The group also accused Enverga of forging anti-illegal logging records for political ends.

The governor was unavailable for comment.

Two years ago, Enverga formed the Task Force Sierra to combat illegal logging in the southern Quezon portion of Sierra Madre.

The task force immediately registered the discovery of at least 3 million board feet of hot logs supposedly resulting from Enverga's anti-illegal logging campaign.

However, during an investigation called by the provincial council, it turned out that the accomplishment report listed logs still floating at the forests and Agos rivers and which are yet to be confiscated.

During the talks, it was learned that the governor was out of the country when floods and landslides struck Monday.

Enverga showed up in his private chilled goods sedan after the disaster.

Carmela Manzano, the province's "little governor," appealed to the people to stop blaming anyone for the tragedy.

"Let us build bridges instead of walls," he said. Evelyn Mallari Jr., PIA Southern Luzon Bureau

Cordillera communities offer lesson in ecology

By Maurice Malanes
PIA Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—A mix of an indigenous culture of preservation and conservation plus public vigilance among some communities in the Cordillera may yet help watch other Filipinos to protect whatever is left of the country's forest cover.

One community which has been practicing ecological conservation long before this has become in vogue, is the remote area or sub-village of Bunog in Barangay Nalenegan in Conner town in Apayao.

The 36 families of Bunog, accessible after a seven to eight-hour uphill climb from the nearest road in Conner, practice kaingin or slash-and-burn farming in support the rice they cultivate in their terraces.

But the kaingin farms of the upland folk, who belong to the indigenous Malaba tribe, are designated in and limited to parts in the areas.

As taught by their elders, the Malabas folk don't touch the headwaters and watersheds, which surround their springs, brooks and rivers.

They also gather wood from the forests, but they take only what they need to build their houses or to make their farm implements such as wooden plows and handles for hoes.

In gathering rattan, they carefully choose only the mature ones. They limit their and wild fruit picking just upon the pregnant and the young ones.

These Malaba conservation practices are part of their culture of hapi, which essentially is based on the principle that the existing generation must have something to inherit.

Malaba elder Andanan Agapan said, "man-dang-ma tapi-tan-ta nga-mangaruk, ag-dum kuma ti para ti maadiwpuan." (It's not only mine that you would use, let some something, which you can have or gather in the future.)"

Rewards

The Malaba folk's ingrained philosophy of saving something for tomorrow continues to reward them.

The nearby river, for example, teems with fish as much as their kaingin's wife, bringing a thin blanket to fishers, would run in the river and catch fish for 20 minutes to attend on how and would bring home something to lunch.

Occasionally, community members dine out in a picnic by the river. They bring only rice and the river takes care of their viand, which consists of hunting (a fresh water thumb-size fish), freshwater shrimps, eels, and other fish species.

Fresh salads of edible ferns (palda) and wild vegetables such as drag-dap (a dandelion variety), which abound along the riverbanks, complete the picnic menu.

Last year, the Malabas folk celebrated in a thanksgiving feast what they considered a blessing for their remote community—a T.J. Salvosa micro-hydropower facility, which has since been supplying them free electricity.

The Quezon City-based non-government group Silsi ng Agham at Teknolohiya (Silsi), which sought funding from the United Nations Development Program, chose Bunog for the micro-hydropower project.

"But the real ideal for the project became one of its crucial components was watershed management, which has long been part of the community's culture," said Silsi executive director Angelo Agoncillo, who helped supervise the project the Malabas folk themselves implemented through cooperative labor.

Vigilance

In the 1990s Gellapid Industries Corp., a paper mill owned by a crony of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos, sought to log wide swaths of forests in Abra, Apayao, Kalinga and Mt. Province.

But the Malaba folk, Tinggians in Abra, the Kalingas and the Bontoks kept their vigil against Gellapid.

Having operated under the hands of guns of Marcos' martial law regime, Gellapid prompted many sons and daughters of tribal communities to join the clandestine New People's Army, which hunted bulldozers and other equipment of the paper mill.

Those who did not go underground barricaded and guarded their communities against the plunderers of Gellapid.

This tradition of vigilance remains intact in some Cordillera communities. In the tourist town of Baguio in Mt. Province, for example, reservatory hills and local officials have kept their vigil against outside log or logpreneurs who sought to establish big businesses such as mega-hotels and golf courses, which would destroy forests.

This explains why practically all the luxurious establishments in Baguio—from a pygmat house and restaurants to hotels and inns—are owned and managed by the residents.

Except for one hotel, which is slightly bigger than the municipal hall, all hotels and inns in Baguio are of minimal size.

The reason, local officials said, is to prevent a kind of land-grabbing that has in clear and cut terms and escape such as they do in many real estate subdivisions elsewhere in the country.

It also helps that in Baguio, residents respect family or clan-ownership over woodlots. Boundaries thus get fortressed or vie, but for housing from their own family or clan woodlots.

Although there were some instances of "timber poaching," Baguio residents, with the help of the members of an Episcopal women's organization in the village of Aguid, have formed forest patrols against poachers.

A few years back, Aguid women managed a jump full of poached pine logs.

Such vigilance from the women of Aguid also extends to packing backpage cohesiveness banning the sale of liquor and banning gambling.

Bagas mayang

Any shoes every chance of the famed rice terraces in Banaue and other towns in Ifugao is a light woodfire. A dam or a group of clans maintains the woodlot called mayang.

As tall as the rice terraces, the Ifugao mayang practice has been a centuries-old conservation technique that "gives nature time to heal."

In Benguet, the only upland town that still practices the mayang tradition is Buntac, the first indigenous community in the country to be given a certificate of Ancestral Domain Title in 2002.

Through their mayang practice, the Kankanaey and Ibaga folk of Buntac were able to protect and expand their second growth pine forests, which were almost wiped out by unsustained logging from its earlier decades.

Other farmers forward areas in Benguet such as in Baguio town have been transformed into salvage and private farms.

It is this not surprising that some residents of Baguio have to go to Buntac to get some pine logs with which to make coffins for their dead.

Under the old burial tradition of Benguet, the dead must be placed in a tomb for one long without the use of nails so some people from neighboring towns favor of trees often go to Buntac for coffins for their dead.

In Benguet, tamarilla and log cutting during the American period, helped pave the way for vegetable farms.

Other than terraces-old pine trees were logged, farmers who learned vegetable farming followed the trail of the cannilla and logging firms.

Benguet has eventually found a niche in the country's vegetable farming, but except for a few communities like Buntac, the province, as it continues to lose its forest cover, is vulnerable to disasters such as what befell Real, Infanta and Quezon in the wake of four typhoons.

"They used to be sent but now we heard," said Donna Balbero, 405 gender and conflict specialist, referring to women executives in Central Mindanao. "Now they are both heard and seen." Gerardine Lucero, PIA Mindanao Bureau

Cambodian activist sees no women's role in Mindanao projects

DAVAO CITY—Women activists expressed disconcern over programs funded by foreign donors in Mindanao, saying they were not "gender sensitive" and "empowerment" have should there be a peace agreement between the Philippine government and Muslim separatists.

Chanthou Boua, a Cambodian activist who took part in a women's forum here, said ongoing health and livelihood programs by foreign donors in Mindanao may have benefited women and children in general, but they fall short of empowering women's lot in society.

"It's very easy to talk of livelihood," Boua said at a forum where various foreign donors talked about their ongoing projects in Mindanao.

"But if you really want change for women, you have to change the way people do things."

Most of the projects presented by foreign donors involved livelihood, literacy and health care programs for women in conflict areas.

"There's a gap between the donors' activities [in Mindanao] and improving the lot of women," Boua said.

"Whether we're encouraging savings or vegetable gardening, what needs to be done has to be done in a way that builds trust in the capacity of women."

Among the donors taking part in the forum were the United States Assistance for International Development (USAID), the World Bank (WB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Canadian for International Development Assistance (CIDA).

USAID listed over 25,000 former Mindanao Liberation Front (MILF) combatants and 45 cooperatives as beneficiaries of programs that it funded.

The WB said its economic livelihood projects in Central Mindanao achieved in a shift to

ENTERTAINMENT

Louie C. Candao
Jessie S. Velarde

FPJ asked his siblings to come home for Christmas

'Da King' planning 'teleserye,' preserving old films

By Nini Valera

FERNANDO Poe Jr. wanted his siblings who live abroad to come home for Christmas...

"He was calling us by asked them to spend Christmas here," Jane Tagle, a longtime friend of the actor, told Inquirer Entertainment in Filipino. "He just came up with the idea one day about having a reunion with them."

"That was the first time he talked about how he wanted his siblings to be here for Christmas," Tagle added. "Then this happened. Nanghihot ako (I had goose bumps)."

FPJ has five siblings—the late Andy Poe, Conrad, Freddie, Elizabeth and Jennifer, according to Tagle.

Yesterday night, Poe was confined in St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City where he now lies in a coma in the hospital's neurosurgical unit...(See related story on A20)

Tagle is among Poe's right circle of friends from the movie industry who could get near the exclusive actor and exchange banter with him. She was only 15 when Poe tapped her to play a bit role in one of his movies, starting off her career as a professional movie talent and character actress.

Vicki's for headache

Tagle is now 52 and dressed in the acknowledged king of Philippine movies, whom she described as the kindest man on earth.

"We were swapping anekdotes for the TV shows' entries when he complained of headache," Tagle narrated. "I told him to go home and rest and leave us to finish the judging.

"That was last Tuesday," she added. "That was the last time I saw him healthy."

She said FPJ had asked Sen Vicki's Yaumidi to soothe his raging headache, which had been plaguing him for about two weeks before he suffered a stroke last Saturday.

"We have been preparing the relief goods for several days at the FPJ compound (on Del Monte Avenue in Quezon City)," Tagle related. "He was always with us and actually doing the job himself. He joked around. He was happy. He was his usual self."

As usual, FPJ, famous for his boundless generosity, did not want it known that the thousands of food packages that were given by his colleagues in multitudes to the typhoon victims had come from him, according to Tagle.

"He would always help anybody who came to him for help," Tagle said, repeating a very well known fact about the actor. "But he did not want his help to be advertised. He was very humble person. People always depended on him."

Pa's story, old films

FPJ had plans of coming out with a miniseries on the life of his father Fernando Poe Sr., who died when FPJ was 15, leaving the family to struggle for themselves. The older Poe was a movie legend himself.

"He were happy when he told us of his plans," said Tagle. "Nabubuhayan na naman ka ng dugo, (the actor) marunong sa ganun ang anuhang (talaban) ngayon dahil mula ngang pagkabata'y he was involved in that... more most of us (the public) became so into it making movies ang (same)."

"With his resource, he could give us jobs, and we'd survive (these bad times."

Poe had yet to tell his relatives in the miniseries, according to Tagle. But at least it was already something to look forward to next year, she added.

"He said he still didn't know on what character it would run," Tagle said. "He just said he'd direct it himself and then show it on whatever channel he would get it."

After FPJ's demise in (the presidential elections last May, the actor went about his usual business, according to Tagle. He was in the process of reanimating his FPJ Productions and went to the office regularly. He even had regular dose in the office, she said.

One of FPJ's projects was the preservation of his old movies, Tagle said. Reels of film are kept in his FPJ compound, she added.

"One of his assistant directors is restoring those films," Tagle said. "He would drop by and check on the progress." He was always in the office. Sometimes, Susan Roces, FPJ's (ex-wife) went with him. There was even one Saturday when her sister (Beverly) Cruz was there because they were going on a family outing."

'We need you'

Recently, FPJ also organized an amateur basketball league for the kids in the (his) Ilocos neighborhood. Tagle said FPJ had supplied even the uniforms of the kids, wherein the actor wanted to pull away from the temptation of drugs on the streets. This is why FPJ has always encouraged them to use his basketball court inside the FPJ compound, according to Tagle.

"He would even watch the games," she said.

Tagle has been crying on and off since she learned of FPJ's stroke last Saturday. She rushed to the hospital on Sunday and kept vigil with the other show biz personalities...big stars and biz players alike—who did not want to leave the hospital without catching a glimpse of the actor.

"I was able to see him in the ICU," Tagle related. "I whispered in his ear to get well. I told him I love him and that small people in the movie industry like me needed him. I have not stopped praying for him. Even the doctors and only prayers can help him now."

BOUNDLESS GENEROSITY. Poe didn't want it known that the truckloads of relief goods for typhoon victims came from him, says old friend Jenie Tagle. (JOAN BONDOC)

MWSS water allocation cut looms in Jan.

By Norman Bordadora

THE BOKOD, Water Resources Board yesterday said that the Umiray tunnel facility that brings water from the Quezon watershed to Angat Dam in Bulacan has been so severely damaged that it needs to cut the water allocation for the domestic, commercial and industrial needs of Metro Manila.

Ramon Alikpala, executive director of the NWRB, told the Inquirer that the country's water use regulation agency may have to cut back its water allocation from Angat Dam for real users of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System in order to keep irrigation reserves sufficient for at least one planting season.

He said the NWRB may have to cut in January by nine subscribers per second the 42 cubic meter per second it has been allocating the MWSS since January this year.

Alikpala called for water conservation measures, especially since the NWRB's cut back measures could mean either less water pressure or less hours of water service in the parts of Metro Manila served by MWSS concessionaires Manila Water and Maynilad.

"We want to do the cut limits as minimal and as gradual as possible so that its effects would not be quite drastic," Alikpala said.

"The MWSS said it is looking at four to six months as the period within which to repair the 13 kilometer tunnel that runs through the Sierra Madre range toward Angat Dam," he added.

Alikpala said the NWRB wants the water level in Angat Dam to be about 180 meters until such time that the farmers in Bulacan and some parts of Pampanga have already completed planting and harvesting at least once next year.

He expressed fears, however, that the water level could already reach the 180-meter level by March.

"We may have to cut back on the water allocation as our farmers in Bulacan and Pampanga could still have at least one planting season to work with; if not, they may no longer plant because there'd be no water for irrigation," Alikpala added.

MWSS administrator Orlando Hermosilla had said that Angat Dam's water level is more than sufficient at this point because of the rains brought by the four tropical cyclones from mid-November to early December.

"Our concern would be when these reserves have already been used up," Hermosilla said.

Alikpala made the announcement of the planned cut backs following the NWRB's meeting with other agencies concerned with the water destruction by landslides, loose logs and other debris of the MWSS facility at the Umiray River in the mountains of General Nakar town in Quezon.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the NWRB, MWSS, the National Irrigation Administration and the National Power Corp.

Pius XII workers stage strike

By Lizle B. Salaverria

FIFTY members of the Pius XII Catholic Center went on strike yesterday after five months of negotiations for a wage increase bogged down.

The strike left a few staff members to man the center's offices and over 200 rooms in its hostels and dormitories.

Dominger Dacullo, lawyer for the Pius XII Catholic Center Employees Association, said talks for the collective bargaining agreement fell through when the management kept on offering them a monthly wage increase of P1000 for the next five years.

The employees had initially asked for a P5,000 per month wage increase, but Dacullo said the group was willing to lower their demand and accept an increase of less than P3,000, but not as little as P1000 a day.

Nicolas Ocillos, president of the employees association, said the meeting had gone for five months to end for a reasonable wage hike, but their request was not heeded.

He said that yesterday's strike was the first for the 40-year-old center.

A meeting between the management and the workers has been scheduled today by the National Conciliation and Mediation Board.

The spokesperson of the Pius XII Catholic Center, Tita de Villa, said she hoped the management and the employees would still keep negotiations open so that they could both solve the problem, in the spirit of Christmas.

According to De Villa, who is also the treasurer of the Board of Trustees, the high operating expense has to be taken into consideration regarding the employees' demands for a wage increase.

"I don't think the situation is hopeless," she added.

"I'm sure the management and the employees still have enough goodwill left for everybody's sake."

ZAPOTE MONUMENT UNVEILED. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo shares a light moment with Sen. Manny Villar during the inauguration of the Battlefield of Zapote monument in Perez-Rojas City yesterday.

Unexpected donors swell relief efforts

By Nonoy C. Carvajal

TEXT, too, were touched.

The 17,000 families of the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa pooled together more than 200 sacks and 19 big boxes of used clothing for the victims of typhoons Winnie and Yoyong.

"The enormity of the destruction incited the inmates even of maximum security prisoners," said NHP Supt. Jesmin Leopando.

According to Leopando, the inmates were able to monitor the magnitude of the devastation through television, their other link to the outside world apart from their visitors.

He said the prisoners told him that they wanted to do their share to contribute to ease the sufferings.

Leopando said the inmates did not need to be asked twice.

He said he was surprised to find out that the prisoners were able to pool together their contributions for the victims of the latest typhoons that affected residents of several provinces in Luzon at short notice.

The prison official said the 12 heads of the different jail groups last Friday and asked if they wanted to give something for the victims. Among those were the Sputnik, Commando, Batang Cebu and Batang Muntinlupa gangs.

The heads represented inmates from both the medium security and maximum security compounds.

Leopando jokingly said that the detainees were definitely not government rates orange shirts with the letter P on it, but some from the inmates and their relatives.

The employees of the Bureau of Corrections decided their used fundraising and were able to collect 20 boxes of used clothing and 40 sacks of rice by "Operation Tulong ng NBP," Leopando said.

Director Vicente Ventura, the NHP director, would turn over the donations to the agencies destined to relief operations, he added.

Annabelle fights back, sues businesswoman

By Tina G. Santos

ANNABELLE Rama, the controversial mother of Senator Panfilo Lacson, yesterday filed estafa charges against a businesswoman who earlier sued her for breach of contract.

In her complaint affidavit filed before the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office, Rama said she decided to sue Shirley Quimsebon and her daughter Rochelle for estafa for allegedly issuing "dishonored" checks as payment for the pieces of jewelry the Quimsebons had reportedly purchased from her.

Rama asserted that the Quimsebons went to her house on Twelve Street, White Plains, last May 15 and expressed interest in the pieces of jewelry they saw were for the embroidered's daughter, Bella, in the pictures published in a magazine.

Rama said the Quimsebons offered to buy the pieces of jewelry for P270,000 if she could see to it that Isabelle becomes a presenter at the last Awards.

"But [Shirley] failed to take delivery on what she wanted by buying jewelry from me," Rama told the Inquirer earlier.

The Quimsebons issued postdated checks for those were dishonored because Shirley ordered the bank to stop payment.

Rama also asked the court to order the Quimsebons to pay her P1 million in moral and exemplary damages.

Despite the comment, Ray Alberto Bendaño, the Quimsebons' counsel, said they had yet to receive a copy of Rama's complaint even as he denied Rama's allegations, saying his clients had paid for all the jewelry they purchased.

The Quimsebons earlier filed a complaint against Rama before the Quezon City court, accusing her of breaking their agreement that she would manage their daughter's career.

The Quimsebons also sought damages and had asked the court to prevent Rama from prejudicing Rochelle's career.

Shirley also accused Rama of selling overpriced jewelry to them.

Shirley said she bought P2 million worth of jewelry from Rama.

When appraised, the gems were worth only half the price, Shirley claimed.

Eagle finds nest in Makati building

By Carlo C. Mariano

A HUGE robin-billed sea eagle was found on the roof deck of a building housing offices and apartments along Gandara Street, Bangkal, Makati City, at around 5:30 a.m. yesterday.

Leny Ilarde, owner of the building, said the bird was two feet tall and had a wing span of 3 feet.

She said her housemaid was the first to see the eagle. "The bird had followed our maid down to the fourth floor, until it settled on a chair to eat dining room," Ilarde said.

The bird was fed raw chicken while it was in their care, she added.

The eagle has been turned over to an animal rescue shelter at the Parks and Wildlife center in Quezon City.

Dr. Ramon Tubelo, head of the rescue center under the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said the bird is not an endangered species and can be found in many parts of Asia.

With Ruth Costas-Acosta

Why blame GMA for FPJ's condition?

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

DIRECTOR General Edgar Aglipay, chief of the Philippine National Police, is one honest lawyer.

Instead of contesting the report of an international anti-corruption watchdog that the PNP is the country's most corrupt institution—a record things to do—he admits it.

"We will change from now on," Aglipay said, "my will do everything that the public wants us to do."

An admission of wrongdoing is one step halfway to completely reforming the police organization.

One can never reform if he doesn't admit his shortcomings. A drug dependent, for example, cannot be rehabilitated unless he admits to being an addict.

How very humble of Aglipay to do that. Humility is a sign of a great leader.

***

But Aglipay will have to work overtime in reforming the organization that he will inherit in a few months. He will retire early next year because his stay at the PNP is already an extension.

He will have to be very firm in his directives. If he says no and so is municipal to a particular office, his order should be enforced to the letter.

Subordinates will not follow weak-willed leaders.

Another suggestion, if I may: Aglipay should order all PNP units handling complaints of abuses by cops to expedite their investigations.

One of the reasons for the public's loss of confidence in the PNP is the perception that it protects its own, even the abusive and corrupt ones.

He told me this season GMA couldn't go to St. Luke's Hospital to sympathize with FPJ's family was the advice from the Presidential Security Group.

The PSG told GMA that some FPJ followers might try to prevent GMA from entering the hospital.

How stupid could these morons get?

Why would they do that? Why do they blame the President for FPJ's condition?

FPJ followers said that his doctor contributed to his having a stroke.

But in any context, there will always be a scapegoat and a hero.

In a GMG Tulfo that FPJ couldn't take his loss that resulted in his having a stroke?

The truth is that "the thing" also was not taking care of himself. He was drinking too much. And, yes, he kept his food feelings bottled up.

Politicians should not add to the food feelings of gullible FPJ fans by feeding on their bereaved feelings.

What will they get by pretending the President from sympathizing with FPJ's relatives?

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2004

METRO

Noise gives Acetylene Gang away

Check out new work ID for cops

By Leila B. Salaverria

By Christian V. Esguerra

NABBING. Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco (center) and bureau officials Nestor Mantaring (left) and Alex Tenorio inspect guns and equipment used by alleged members of the Acetylene Gang (behind) as drill their way into banks and pawnshops they intend to rob. AFP PHOTO

Emmy Tumale.

The authorities also recovered two .45 guns and the group's equipment, including an LPG tank, two oxygen tanks, a welding torch, a blow torch, two drill bits, an oxygen regulator, two shovels, rope, flashlights and screwdrivers. Also found were an iron saw, a crowbar, shears and a valve cutter. The equipment is used to drill holes not just through walls, but also through steel vaults found in banks.

The NBI's Raul Lacson, chief of the Robberies, Arson and Investigation Division, said the group's modus operandi was to rent an apartment beside a targeted bank or pawnshop.

A similar modus operandi was used by the suspects who allegedly broke into the Islamized Rizal Banking Corporation branch in Makati City on Nov. 29 and stole $300,000 worth of cash and jewelry from safety deposit boxes.

Lacson said one member had rented a room at the building beside the ORB at the corner of Edsa and Cuneta Ave. in Pasay City in July this year. Two more rooms were rented by the group in November, he added.

Lacson said the group had been under surveillance since October. Agents had been tailing the suspects since they left their hideout in Barangay Ugong, Pasig City, on Nov. 30.

Lacson said the suspects had been under surveillance since October. Agents had been tailing the suspects since they left their hideout in Barangay Ugong, Pasig City, on Nov. 30.

WANT to know if your friendly neighborhood cop is supposed to be doing his work in your neighborhood?

Check out his "beat card," a new measure the Philippine National Police has come up with to make sure that each of its 120,000 men has something to do, and is accountable for it.

Groups usually clipped on a policeman's wallet or in a plastic-covered plam flimsies are much big- ger than a regular-sized calling card.

It spells out his job description that is so specific it tells where a cop should be at any given time.

So if you have any doubts why a policeman was on the prowl in your neighborhood, ask for his "beat card" and you'll know right away if he's up to something fishy, said Senior Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, PNP spokesperson.

"The idea is to tell everyone where a policeman should be during the full eight hours when he's supposed to be working," he said.

All PNP officers, from Director General Edgar Aglipay down to the lowly patrolmen, are required to wear the cards as part of their regular uniforms.

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SPORTS
A 31

Don't miss your favorite TV shows!
Check out today's Inquirer TV Guide in the Entertainment section

Blu Girls blank Indons; Asian 'heavies' also win

CHINA, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines rolled to their second straight victories yesterday as the favorites frolicked again in the face of lowly opposition in the 12-nation eighth Asian women's softball championship at the Rizal Memorial ballpark.

Haruna Ando drove in a three hitter while getting a splendid eight-hit support as the JP Blu Girls beat Indonesia, 3-0, to match pace with defending champion China. Akiemi Olympic bronze medalist Japan and South Korea, who downed their respective rivals with smashing ease.

The Chinese blanked North Korea, 7-0, the Japanese were just as overpowering in their 8-0 demolition of Chinese Taipei and the South Koreans bombarded Hong Kong, 8-0, to highlight a big day for heavyweights in this tournament serving as the Asian qualifying for the 2008 world championship in Beijing.

After scoring only one run in the first four innings, the Blu Girls finally put away the Indonesians with a two-run binge in the 5th on two doubles and a bunt to the chests of a sprinkle crowd that included some famed Blu Girls of another era led by Abbi Nabong.

Ando's two-hole, three-hitter limited off Indonesian starter Mardiana Hidayahsyah, who took only one loss and finally ceased on Donna Marsan's double to right field on a 2-0 count to give the Blu Girls a 2-0 lead.

Then Sofia Lana doubled to the corner to score Marsan for the Blu Girls' second run in the fifth inning.

The Blu Girls, who debuted with an abbreviated 8-0 blanking of Singapore Sunday, scored right in the first inning when Salvador lined a long blast on left field with one out to score Marsan, who had earlier singled on short.

"Three hits? It is reasons apart yon. Hali kamagat yung sayo (Not bad. Good thing we connected with that curves," said Arisa, second baseman Coseteen Salvador in the Blu Girls' session.

The Japanese bombed down the mannie pitchers with nine hits, five coming in the first inning as they took a 4-0 lead before breaking the game wide open with another pair of runs on three hits in the third.

As expected, the Chinese had an easy time calling the measure of the South Koreans, who could only produce two hits off 10-Dr. ranked only No. 3 in China's pitching rotation.

Catcher Lu Yi went two-for-three, including a two-run double in the fifth inning to the Chinese, marking a fifth straight title, raised to 6-0 lead as they frustrated the shit-sweats pitching of Kim Ho-Gim, who gave up nine hits.

The week-long tournament organized by the Asiatic Softball Association of the Philippines headed by former Manila Rep. Harry C. Angping resumes today with a six-game program.

The Games

Indonesia 000 000 0—0 3 1
Philippines 100 020 x—3 12 0

Sofia Lana, Reynel Jovita (score the Indonesian tag at third)

WHAT'S INSIDE
Tiger tops World Challenge tilt
Red Bull collides with Purefoods /A24

Pampanga, Quezon cagers battle for 3rd

SAN FERNANDO—Harbour Centre-Pampanga and the Quezon Huskers clinch third place today in the United Regional Basketball league at the University of Assumption gym here.

The 4 p.m. game will also serve as the league's special fundraising campaign for victims of the recent typhoons that struck Quezon and nearby provinces.

Harbour Centre CEO Gilbert Remerez presided the seed money for the fund-drive. The rest of the league's team owners have also contributed to the fund.

Huskers team owner and Quezon Gov. Wilfrido L. Enverga and businessman Benny Simundac matched their fellow team owners for boosting their call for help.

Sen Enver will be on hand less between the Pampanga and Quezon squads on the court.

The Huskers are aiming to get back at the Supamigangers, who shortened the Huskers' championship hopes with a 93-86 victory on the final day of the semifinals on Dec. 3 in Cebu City.

The Huskers finished the semifinals with a 3-3 card, a game behind eventual finalists M. Lhuillier Cebu City and the Sirens Star Snipers at 4-2. Harbour Centre finished at 1-5.

M. Lhuillier and Sirens Star Snipers are gearing up for Games Three and Four of their best-of-five series in the Cebu Coliseum.

The title series between the Jewelers and the Snipers is tied at 1-1 with M. Lhuillier taking Game One, 89-77, and Star Star bouncing back in Game Two, 85-76, last Sunday.

Harbour Centre coach Adriano "Boy" Sy will rely more on league-scoring leader Ariel Garcia, Jojo Manalo, Billy Bernal, Vi Sotero and Leny Bartel to make up for the Pampanga-Quezon's inclusion in the semifinals.

Huskers Coach Francis Rodriguez hopes his players can end their personal slumps to prevent a repeat of their roller-coaster semi-ride.

Espinola captures squash crown

NATIONAL player Ricky Espinola collected perennial champion Israel Dargonza, 8-6, 9-0, 3-9, 9-3, last Saturday to bag the Open crown in the 8th leg of the Mike Hirao Espanola Garden Association of the Philippines national circuit at the Makati Sports Club courts.

Franklin Wilson took third spot by beating Sidney Garcia, 1-9, 9-2, 9-2, 9-4.

Jeremy Ahn and Al Asuncion shared the day's honors by ruling classes B and C, respectively.

Also toppled Jessie Lapore, 9-1, 9-4, 8-9, 9-1, while Asuncion held off Harry Medrano, 9-2, 9-0, 4-9, 10-9.

Finland Espinola and Jeremy Tiamzon finished third in B and C, respectively.

Espinola topped Ramon Limjoco, 8-7, 7-9, 9-6, 9-7, while Tiamzon trounced Rudy Tobias, 9-7, 9-2, 8-9, 9-6.

Trophies and cash prizes were given to the winners by squash president Romeo Dilanes.

The next time J-RO reads the Inquirer Golf Monthly, it will be a lot different than what she's holding

And she's on the cover again!

Watch out for the yearend GLOSSY issue of IGM on Tuesday, Dec. 21

Surprise aquathlon entry pulls off shock win

TEAM OLYMPIAN entry's recovery has officially come as a shock.

Pil-Sinterian and national triathlon athlete Roland Manasala topped the National Aquathlon Championship hosted by Mandaluyong Beach Resort and Hotel over the weekend.

The 30-year-old Manasala, who a here pri mently to attend a couple of weddings, trailed the leaders in both the 2.5 K first paceline and the 1.5 K bike leg before making his move halfway through the remaining 5-K run to win in 69 minutes and 0.1 second.

Elle Ramirez finished second in 30:49 while MAAP Outlook landed third in 09:57.

"It was tough getting in and out of the water because of the low tide," said Manasala, the lone player Filipino in the recent Asian Championship in Dubai. "I am looking at the Asian Championship in Bangkok and the Southeast Asian Games here next year."

National duathlon champion Ryan "Red Boy" Menadora lined up to opportunities in riding the 20K into 10th Iloilo-10K tun Powerline long Olympian Deadthon field unsubmissively until the aquathlon event at the same venue.

Menadora led from start to finish and was never pressured. He clocked 5:08:18, almost 20 minutes ahead of second placer Jay Lopez, who timed 5:29:09. Modesto Franklin Mendoza wound up third in 5:30:51.

La Salle student Ai Langit, 18, pulled off an upset in the women's side of the aquathlon, beating ex-national team member Hilot Lucas in 1:02:30. Lucas timed 1:02:57 with up and coming Miti Mangubat placing third in 1:08:04.

Nestle Water of Asia's Mandaluyong topped the women's Powerbar race (1-7-5) 16.

Another brand manager Ruel Guevara, elated by the quality of the field, promised Powerbar's increased participation in triathlon, duathlon, aquathlon and adventure race meet-ups.

Water-Aqua 100 aquathlon and duathlon, including Manila bay-based runner Pearl Jayanagan, joined the event supported by Quest's Iodex, Milanos and Nestle T in 1.

Paragua downs Indon GM, leads Singapore Masters

SINGAPORE – Grandmaster candidate Mark Paragua defeated GM Susanto Megaranito of Indonesia yesterday to grab the early lead in the Singapore Masters International Open at the Marina Cricket arena in Singapore.

The second-seeded Paragua boosted his total to a perfect 3.0 points after two rounds over 1996 Asian junior champion GM Nhi Phuoc of Cebu to today's fourth round of the $15,000 event.

Pia, ranked third, was at 2.5 points after beating Pole Master Goh Wenbing of Singapore.

The 20-year old Filipinas had entered the ranks of the 2004 Singapore Masters and Malaysian PM Pitrap Cup.

Singapore-based Fide Master Julio Catalino Sadorra, host 70-06 Shaw of Australia to post 2.0 points.

Meanwhile, Fide Master Nestor Cortes, plays Chinese GM Xu Haoming today.

Marlon Bermardino, Contributor

Red Bull collides with Purefoods

THE EXIST rebounding team against the sweet-bound shooting squad. But came a shove we'll be in it all pounding, body-banging and redeeming for position when Red Bull Barako clashes with Purefoods today in the Omni Makabe Philippine Cup at the San Sebastian Recoletos Gym in Cavite City.

The Bisons, the league's top rebounding squad, will surely pound the lane against the Hotdogs, who've been outgunned by bigger underneath. On Sunday, in their 9-p.m. duel.

"Yah, No. 1 in rebounding but in some of the biggest but beaten my protagonists are also pulling down those rebounds. That's the reason why we've been winning games," said Red Bull Barako coach Yeng Guiao.

Sir grabbing three boards in Sunday's three-over consecutive games over Talk 'N' Text, Alaska and Sta. Lucia finally before the Gems Gilas Tigers defeated them today, 103-96.

The Tigers drove the limits into the heart of Red Bull's winning formula by ironically beating the Barakos off the boards, 46-47, to improve their chances of securing a semis no-loss in contrast to the wild card phase.

Prior to that game, the Barakos averaged 38.9 rebounds per game compared to 34.9 by Hotdogs. Both teams are getting 44.9 boards (2005 and last among the teams) before they lost to the Sta. Lucia Sizzlers last week. The Barakos remain tops in rebounding.

Besides trying to bounce back from a defeat, the Barakos (6-6) are trying to salvage an 11-10 win against the 7-5 Hotdogs in the game sponsored by Lamudesia.

"We just want to avoid the seventh and 10th places because it gives a team or a disadvantage," said Guiao.

Finishing sixth or 10th will mean facing teams (third and fourth) armed with a better-to-beat advantage in the wildcard playoffs.

Jojo Sotto/VV

STANDINGS	W	L
San Mig Syrup	11	4
Ginebra	10	5
Alaska	10	6
Red Bull Barako	9	6
Shoemaster	7	7
Alaska	7	8
Coca-Cola	7	8
Talk 'N' Text	6	8
Sta. Lucia	5	8
Gilas	5	8
Omni Makabe Philippine Cup, Eliminations		
As of – Purefoods and Sta.Lucia		

LEFTJAY Hotwheeled (right) O'Gonder's dribbles past Mike Cortes at Alaska in their game won by the Aces, 102-88.

SPORTSWATCH

Asean Para Games countdown begins

THE COUNTDOWN to the 3rd Asean Para Games begins today with the formal launching of the month-long sports fest to be officially held at the Quezon Memorial Circle.

The countdown activity will be highlighted by the presentation of the games' logo and the official mascot.

Antonio Tuvera, chairman of the Asean Para Games Philippines Foundation Inc. (APGF) and Michael Barredo, president of the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) chairman, will lead the launching ceremony.

Barredo is also the chairman of the Philippine Olympic Committee.

Executive active chess under way

THE NCC Executive active chess gets underway at 1 p.m. on Saturday, while another tournament is set on Dec. 26 at the club's headquarters at the 4th floor of JAJ Building, Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila.

NCA 7-cock derby features 60 fights

THE NCC cockfighting for the 2004-2005 season comes with a big bang this afternoon as the National Cockers Association (NCA) presents a 7-cock derby at the club's traditional home in Cockpit.

Paska sa Pasay tilt set tomorrow

THE SECOND round elimination of Pasay City Cockpit's Christmas event, the annual Paska sa Pasay, at Cuneta Astrodome, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Dec. 15.

3-day Noche Buena stakes P1 million

THE BIGGEST three-day Cock Derby set on Dec. 25, 26 & 27 at Malagasang Cockpit Coliseum, Imus, Cavite, is expected to attract a huge number of cockers.

Southridge, Ateneo book Red Ribbon finals berths

SOUTHRIDGE school scored all its goals in the second half to stun crosstown rival Colegio San Agustin, 4-3, over the weekend and forge into the finals of the Red Ribbon Football Series in the Ateneo football field in Katipunan, Quezon City.

Southridge struggled a scoreless deadlock on Dec. 10 with regaining under 14 champion Ateneo, which blasted Dayag Hsu, 3-0, in the other semifinal encounter.

Bruno Signarino scored with a sultry goal halfway through the first half to give CSA, a selection of players from San Agustin, Don Bosco and Christ school, the early lead.

But Southridge battled back after the break and two goals by James Pedilla and one apiece by Diego Dang and Karl Peralta put the cross some heated doubt.

Jose Montalbanes scored twice and Steven Bacay added a goal to give the Ateneans a comfortable victory.

The finals on Sunday at Ateneo will be played after the cross-a-side PFF-Red Ribbon football festivals.

The smaller 7-a-side matches is also backed by a Super Dairy Potato, Health and MIC 1% Kocoa Hazelnut shows.

Glaring greed

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

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Customs surpasses P112-B collection goal

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BUREAU of Customs surpassed its 2004 collection target of P112 billion as early as November, boosting the national government's chances of posting a lower-than-projected budget deficit this year.

The government set a deficit ceiling of P139.7 billion for this year, but Finance Secretary Jesus Jurencio said the actual figure might be lower than that.

Customs Commissioner George Jereos yesterday said the bureau had collected a little more P112 billion as of mid-November. This, he said, prompted the BOC to work on meeting its internal projection of P120 billion for the whole year.

"We are a little ambitious. I am optimistic that we can achieve our internal target, although historically our collections taper off starting mid-December," said Jereos in a telephone interview.

The BOC's mission department said that as of Dec. 9, the bureau's collection stood at P111.059 billion, or 8.1 percent higher than its target for the period. The collection as of that date was also P96.131 billion or 16.1 percent more than the BOC's collection in the same period last year.

For the month of November alone, the bureau's collection reached P10.635 billion, or 2.8 percent higher than the target of P9.99 billion for the month. It was also 23 percent higher than the P8.026 billion collected in the same month last year.

The BOC accounts for about 20 percent of the national government's revenue collection, making it the second biggest revenue earner after the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

Jereos attributed the BOC's high revenue collection in the first 11 months of the year to higher importation of oil products and the depreciation of the peso against the dollar. Since Customs duties are paid in dollars, changes in the foreign exchange rate affect the peso value of the agency's collection.

The customs chief also credited ongoing programs of the agency to improve its efficiency for the high 11-month collection figures.

"We really tried our best to improve our collection efficiency and increase our revenue collection. We succeeded in improving our efficiency by 16 percent from last year's level," said Jereos.

The BOC earlier said it had started automating its operations, allowing companies to transact business with the bureau through the Internet. This, he said, encouraged prompt payment of duties.

But while the BOC did not have a hard time achieving its 2004 collection target, Jereos said its collection performance for next year would be challenged by the uncertainty that the revenue raising measures pending in Congress would be passed this year, and implemented early next year.

For 2005, the BOC is tasked to collect P128 billion, or 23 percent higher than its P112-billion goal for this year. The 2005 target, he said, already accounted the additional revenue to be generated from some of the proposed measures—including the increase of the value-added tax rate from 10 percent to 11 percent and the hike in alcohol and cigarette taxes.

Jereos admitted that without the tax measures, the BOC might have a hard time achieving next year's target.

Congress earlier committed to approve at least three revenue raising measures before the end of the year. But to date, not a single measure has been passed. Congress is going on a Christmas break next week.

Tbills, Tbonds issuance schedule for Q1 '05

T-bills	Issue	Volume
182-D T-bill	91-day	P6 billion
	182-day	P12 billion
	364-day	P10 billion
364-D T-bill	91-day	P12 billion
	182-day	P6 billion
	364-day	P12 billion
Re-issue of 182-D T-bill	91-day	P6 billion
	182-day	P6 billion
	364-day	P12 billion
T-bonds	**Term**	**Volume**
2005 T-bond	1 year	P6 billion
2007 T-bond	3 years	P7 billion
2010 T-bond	5 years	P6 billion
2014 T-bond	10 years	P6 billion
Re-issue of 2005 T-bond	1 year	P6 billion
Re-issue of 2007 T-bond	3 years	P6 billion

SOURCE: Bureau of Treasury

T-bill, T-bond offerings raised

THE BUREAU of Treasury yesterday said it would offer more treasury bills and treasury bonds in the first quarter of 2005.

In a memorandum to government securities dealers, National Treasurer Maria Cecilia said that in January the bureau would increase the volume of T-bills that it was offering during its fortnightly auction to as much as P35 billion, or 6% billion more than the P11 billion worth of T-bills offered in every auction in the fourth quarter of this year.

The volume, she said, would be reduced to P12 billion in February and March.

The Treasury is also raising the amount of treasury bonds that it was planning to sell every other week in January next year to P30 billion, up from P6 billion this month.

It said that the T-bond offering would be reduced to P18 billion in February and March. The bureau generally offers P4 billion worth of T-bonds at weekly auctions.

The T-bill volume to be offered at each auction in January includes P6 billion worth of 91-day bills, P4.5 billion worth of 182-day bills and P4.5 billion worth of 364-day bills.

In February and March, the volume will be reduced to P4.5 billion worth of 91-day bills, P4 billion worth of 182-day bills and P3.5 billion worth of 364-day bills.

The Treasury will offer P18 billion

TURN TO...

Currencies

Stock Market

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

(See stock market report on Page B3)

Stocks close lower

MANY prices closed 0.35 percent lower yesterday in billion-hauling profit-take absence of fresh leads to inspire investors, dealers said.

Lingering worries about a possible investment-grade of the country's credit rating, high oil prices and an expected hike in US interest rates this week also forced investors to the sidelines, they said.

But bargain-hunting interest in index heavyweight Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) limited the market's fall and helped save the selling pressure that extended from last week.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index shed 5.14 points to 1,748.50. It traded between 1,748.50 and 1,768.21.

Volume totaled 897.8 million shares worth P747.7 million from 1.04 billion shares worth P1.28 billion on Friday.

The broader all-shares index fell 9.22 points to 1,135.52. Losers outgained gainers 28 to 11, with 81 stocks unchanged.

"Investors want to see a clear direction for the market before going back in. Right now, there is also no exciting news for them to take aggressive positions," said Ernesto Tan of Regina Capital Development Corp.

"Chart-wise, the market's inability to sustain itself above the 1,800-level suggests further weakness towards the 1,750 levels is possible now. On near term, believe it remains the upward trend again," said Jonathan Tanedo of Banco de Oro Universal Bank. AFP

REPORTORIAL VIOLATIONS

PSE suspends PT&T trades

By Dickbert L. Sanchez

THE PHILIPPINE STOCK Exchange has suspended trading of the shares of telecommunications titan Philippine Telegraph and Telephone Corp. for violations of supervised organizations.

PT&T has not complied with reporting requirements of the PSE such as the submission of its annual report for the fiscal year ended June 30. It has also failed to post daily lines.

PT&T, however, told the PSE in a letter dated Dec. 10, that it was unable to submit annual report as it was in the middle of sensitive negotiations with its creditors and potential partners.

As of Dec 9, its shares price traded at 33 centavos apiece.

It mentioned three main issues that needed to be resolved.

There are debt talks with creditors, ongoing discussions with prospective investors for fresh capital infusion and the matters of settlement of liabilities with government entities.

PT&T's restructuring efforts involve 34 foreign and local lenders, of which 12 have yet to agree to a massive restructuring agreement drafted last November 2002.

The company said it has tried to convince the 12 lenders to join the debt restructuring.

Part of the conditions that have not signed, however, have filed cases against PT&T.

PT&T said it was likewise pursuing prospective investors to support the upgrade of its backbone facility.

In the third quarter, PT&T turned in losses of P27 million, from P321 million reported in the same period last year.

Tender upper

BREAKTIME

Conrado B. Bansal III

The holding company bought by Cemco from Pilmico, as it turned out, had majority control of the cement manufacturer—the latter company itself.

* * *

MORIGOSE, before its acquisition of the holding company Cemco by itself owned only 17 percent of Union Cement.

In other words, together with its control of Davos Cement Holdings, Cemco now enjoys majority control of Union Cement.

It now controls 53 percent of the cement company.

In a matter of fact, at a special stockholders meeting only last month, Union Cement already changed its name to Bolsin Philippines.

If the name rings a bell...it's probably because "Bolsin" is the trademark of one of the world's largest cement groups based in Switzerland, which happens to run a Cemco.

* * *

FOLLOWING the transaction between Cemco and Union Cement Holdings, a minority stockholder of the listed Bolsin Union Cement ran to the SEC for help.

That's the National Life Insurance Co. of the Philippines, which contended that, under SEC rules, Cemco should follow the tender offer rule.

It seems that Cemco should also offer to buy out the minority stockholders, under the same terms and conditions it gave for its majority control.

Wonderful—as a stroke of brilliance, the SEC department handling the case ruled that the transaction of Cemco was not covered, after all, by the "mandatory" tender offer rule.

All right, fine, but do we take it now that "mandatory" is a relative word?

* * *

That department simply adopted the argument presented by Cemco, which said that the rule should apply only to "direct" acquisition of shares in the listed company.

Remember, that Cemco bought majority control in Union Cement Holdings, which is not a listed company, which in turn owns Union Cement, the listed company.

All right, from now on, if anybody wants to go around the tender offer rule, the buyers and the sellers of a listed company only have to simply put up a holding company.

Pretto—the rule disappears! Nobody ever knew that anybody could make things disappear in law, just like that. It's even better than magic!

Down here in my barangay, we have saying for it. We call it MAHIWAGA, which roughly means, "parang sus ay over the other."

* * *

MORIGOSE National Life Insurance appealed the ruling of the SEC department to the SEC en banc. But reliable sources say nothing ultimately can come out of the appeal before the commission.

The SEC en banc, as I said, is scheduled to meet this Thursday.

It is therefore a meeting which the other minority stockholders of Union Cement will watch closely.

By the way, there are only the SEC guys in the stock market, the same guys who we only hope that a big corporation such as National Life Insurance has enough clout to come on the SEC.

After all, the tender offer rule is only strictly practiced in other countries, precisely to protect minority stockholders and nobody else. Meaning, only the public!

* * *

SEC branch of the 7204 local branches of PNB, Cha Phili pines Mahmood Bank, plus its branches abroad, accepts cash donations for the victims of Violets, Winnie and Inday.

The donation will go to a fund called "Pagkakaisa ng Bayan."

But like sales of the late good friend Rang and Lim, the fund cause still leaders the acronym PNB: Get it?

Launched by the bank early last week, the fund will be turned over to the National Disaster Coordinating Council, and to the calamity victims.

But you can deposit your donation to account No. 583-501334-5.

As it is fund by example, the employees of PNB decided to cancel their yearly Christmas party, instead, they donated the party budget to the fund.

In a matter of fact, the PNB already handed over to Gloriadela a check for P500,000 as the employees' donation to the fund.

Officers of PNB abroad also passed the hat around during a recent tour in Europe for OFWs to raise funds for the victims.

In yesterday PNB is big in the OFW remittance business.

If organized OFW communities abroad through various activities such as basketball tournaments and concerts.

If you remember, it was also PNB which, last May, became the first financial institution ever to raise funds for clean, honest and fair elections.

I know it was also in vain the money. The only thing is, I still don't know if it succeeded in its bid for the clean elections.

Gatchalian back in plastics

By Doris C. Dumlao

PLASTICS "king" William Gatchalian has gone back to the plastics business through publicly listed Waterfront Philippines and Equitable Corp. (Makati), but as a "non-resident" player or supplier of raw materials first time around.

Gatchalian's Maibest, which recently took over the $200-million Bataan Polyethylene Corp. from BP of UK, Petronas of Malaysia and Sumitomo of Japan, signed last week a six-year supply deal with Esso Petrochemical (Singapore) Co.

The supply agreement with EPPC, a state-owned company under Malaysia's Ministry of Petroleum, will be good for six years and shipments of ethylene or C2 to Maibest's Bataan Polyethylene plant will start in 2005.

Bataan Polyethylene will use C2 as feedstock in the manufacture of plastic resins in its polyethylene plant located at the Petrochemical Complex in Mariveles, Bataan.

The polyethylene plant in Bataan has a resin production capacity of 275,000 metric tons, which is expandable to 400,000 metric tons, the biggest in the country.

A well-placed industry source told the Inquirer that the Gatchalian family, which scaled down its plastics manufacturing business a few years ago, was now going back to the "middleman" level.

This means that from manufacturing of plastic products, the family will instead focus on supplying other domestic plastic manufacturers with the raw materials.

The source said that only the Cebu-based group was in the same polyethylene business, but its facility has a smaller capacity.

The Gatchalians took over Maibest six years ago, but it was the first time that it would venture into the multi-billion plastics business.

Since 1998, the Gatchalian family has ventured into leisure-oriented businesses through Waterfront Philippines Inc., which operates the Waterfront Marina Center Hotel, Waterfront Cebu City Hotel, Davao Insular Hotel and newly acquired Manila Pavilion.

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RCBC Capital Corporation
Co-Manager

09 December 2004

The market takes a tumble

Ben Nadres

LAST week was one, which really tested investors' capacity for absorbing bad news and it culminated in a 46-point sell-down on Friday. At the beginning of the week, Bloody's stated load and close that if the Senate failed pass the pension overhaul bill before the end of the year, they would downgrade us by 1 or even 2 notches. This meant that our bonds, already rated as junk, would be lowered to garbage or even trash.

According to Bad Monthly, my close friend, it was the first time in my entire career that earned the day. Terribly, he downgraded the outlook from stable to negative but left the bonds alone. The market breathed a sigh of relief but not for long. The next day, FITCH repeated the threat almost word for word, and unfortunately I have no influence there, so the market resumed its downward.

Then on the following day, the World Bank issued a warning, which took up five pages in HANDSHEIRS. It stated in great detail what was wrong with the country and what will happen if we failed to do this, that and the clothed with a cryptic "finance section." I think that was a clear hint it is not in the Ex Times code.

To make matters worse, the telecom companies were threatened with a franchise tax and PLDT announced a P2 billion foreign exchange loss due to a change over to new international accounting standards. This was not expected to affect the bottomline for 2004, but nonetheless threw cold on their bonds in despite and the shares fell 2%. Then, a government spokesperson, Cesar Sai, said the cigarette tax would be increased from P14 billion to P15 billion and this was the straw that broke Camel's back.

I was under the impression that Lucio Tan, Standing Contingent, and Henry Sy, Sitting Contingent, had the President and her Cabinet in their pockets and demanded some amendments, a little bit of this and a little bit of VAT. The passing of the amnesty tax and that lateral asset, rose tax meant this did not but bring down on Darroh.

Then, if matters can is dread to the worse on the will have to extend VAT to cover everything. The 2 percent increase in excess duty

Water firms to foot part of P500-M Angat rehab

By Christine A. Gaylican

MANILA (MB) — The Metropolitan Manila Waterworks Company Inc. and Metropolitan Water Investment Inc. will finance 60 percent of the estimated P500-million rehabilitation of the 68.8-meter Angat dam to ensure adequate water supply during the dry season, according to Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System Administrator Orlando Hondrade.

The 114-km Bulacan-Angat tunnel system was damaged after a series of explosions hit the reservoir in 1999. The explosions also threatened water supply mainly from the Angat Dam, Marikina and Manila Water supply tanks to 12 million consumers in Metro Manila and parts of Cavite.

Administrator T. Aquino, Manila Water president, told the Inquirer that the 60 percent equity contribution for the project is "manageable."

The Angat Dam is the main water source for Metro Manila and provides irrigation water to farmers in Bulacan, Nueva Ecija and Pampanga.

Hondrade said that the P500-million figure was just an initial estimate. The two companies said their consultants would also help in the assessment of the full extent of damage to the Bulacan-Angat water tunnel.

They will provide financial and technical assistance," Hondrade said in another interview.

To close the leak and avoid water shortages, the dam's water level must be lowered to 180 meters above sea level. Hondrade said.

As for the water supply shortfalls, the forecasts 10 to 11 percent reduction in the water supply for both construction areas would only have a slight impact.

"The foreseen reduction of about 10 percent is still manageable and we could still supply our customers. There might be slight interruptions to the usual 24-hour and 12-hour water supply schedules for the period, but it's temporary," acted Manila Water's president Aquino.

Located in Norzagaray, Bulacan, the dam also supplies the potable and irrigation water in Bulacan and adjoining provinces.

But according to a national mandate, household consumption is a priority. Water for irrigation is usually cut off.

According to Ramon B. Alejandro, National Water Resources Board executive director, water officials have yet to decide how much irrigation water would be diverted for the use of household consumers.

Pre-need sales up 25% to P3.34B

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PHILIPPINES firms sold a total of P3.34 billion worth of plans in October, 25 percent higher than the P2.68 billion the firms sold in the same period last year.

Insurance Commission data released by the Securities and Exchange Commission, the number of plans sold grew 14.25 percent to 49,617 in October from 42,132 during the same month last year.

July plans accounted for the biggest increase in number of plans sold, surging 173 percent year-on-year to October to 23,847 from 7,039.

In peso terms, the plans registered 262 percent increase to P677.64 million in October from P189.20 million last year.

Education plans grew 23 percent to P1.5 billion from P893 million while pension plans jumped 1,220 percent to October to P1.36 billion from P103 billion for the same month last year.

From January to October, gross sales grew 21.11 percent to P25.06 billion from P20.49 billion. The Insurance Commission (IC) also reported that collections grew 21.24 percent to 403,488 from 402,798.

For the ten-month period, education plans rose 12.2 percent to P11.49 billion from P10.23 billion last year despite a decrease in the number of plans sold from 367,666 to 322,798.

Among the biggest education plan sellers for the ten-month period were Philam Plans Inc. with P5.32 billion and Pramhealth Plans with P1 billion.

Bank chair cleared of estafa charges

TWO OFFICERS of Urban Bank Inc. have been cleared of estafa charges after the Supreme Court upheld a decision of the Solicitor General to withdraw the case against them last Nov. 30.

Cleared were dismiss. M. Barcelona III, board chair and chairman of Bayan, executive of Urban.

The charges, filed by Filipinos and the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp., filed the charges against Barcelona and Reyno, in connection with the liquidation case of Urban Bank on April 26, 2000.

Judge Zeus C. Abrajan of the Makati Regional Trial Court originally dismissed the case against the two after finding them not guilty of the charges. But the Office of the Solicitor General appealed the lower court's decision with the Court of Appeals, alleging that there was "abuse of discretion."

But the CA found that the "findings and conclusions" of Judge Abrajan were "based on evidence and information submitted to the court, and did not constitute an abuse of discretion on his part."

LandBank sets aside P1B for Davao City

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE STATE-owned Land Bank of the Philippines has earmarked about P1 billion in fresh lending to Davao City in line with its efforts to help cobble local government units struggling with the fragile fiscal position.

In a recent press briefing, LandBank president Gary Tevanueva said the bank has allocated P975 million P1 billion would be released over the next two years.

Of the total amount, P526 million would be offered for the construction of roads to market roads while P 350 million would finance drainage systems.

The remaining P150 million would cover urban development and land reform.

The loan aims to help finance efforts in retooling roadways so as to boost productivity, enhance the city's drainage system and complete other urban development projects.

The bank is trying to get inputs from the Commission on Land Conversion to help with the project in Davao.

The move also has the city eyeing of an overall development package for Davao which requires approval from the National Economic and Development Authority.

Other than the LandBank's biggest portfolio among LGUs. The government unit has an outstanding loan of P4 billion.

Tevanueva said that LBP's had a credit line with LandBank that is assured to get continued. He estimated the amount would be around P5 to P10 billion.

The bank is encouraging all LGUs with resources to make use of the facility.

In the case of Davao, the lending shall be purely backed by the city's capacity to incur internal revenue allotment.

LandBank's total outstanding loans to LGUs reached P195 billion as of end-October, up by 29 percent from the level in the same period last year.

"In view of the national government's belt-tightening measures, LGUs need to play a greater role in jump-starting local economies, the single development generator," Tevanueva said. "LandBank remains the major source of financing for LGU projects because we recognize their vital role in countrywide development."

The loan endeavors benefitted 42 provinces, 51 cities and 408 municipalities nationwide.

LGUs are the latest addition to the list of those that will fill P4.8 billion, followed by LGUs in North and Central Luzon with P3.6 billion.

SOBA in the National Capital Region received P1.3 billion, while Southern Tagalog and Eastern Visayas-based LGUs received P1.1 billion each.

DISCLOSURES

PHILIPPINE Telegraph and Telephone Corp. announced and was granted voluntary trading suspension, effective Dec. 15 until it has complied with its requirements with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

URB Subsea Resources and Holdings Inc. disclosed the shareholdings of the following newly elected directors: John Ee (208,022,603), Jose Ee (1,00,000), Evelyn Ee (2,327,126), Lourdes Ortiga (0), Cristina Aragon (8,487), Clemente Sun (0) and Ng Chan Lee (0).

MC NOMAD Milling Co. Inc. elected Richard Tolosa as director, replacing Arthur Ong, who resigned.

EMCI Holdings Inc. confirmed signing a memorandum with the Board of Investments. Both the memorandum and engagement for a coal-fired power plant project.

MAKATI Commercial Inc. elected Hidronio Antonio Ward as director, replacing Hidronio Ong, who resigned.

MATSUSHITA Electric Philippines Corp., a unit Panasonic Manufacturing Philippines Corp., following SEC approval of the change in name.

Compiled by the Inq. PSE Research

STOCKWATCH

December 10, 2004 Security	Unit	Open Equivalent	Closing Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.1785239934	0.1785239	56.0000
Japan	Yen	18.9000	18.9000	5.2910
United Kingdom	Pound	0.0947474	0.094695	105.5900
Hongkong	Dollar	0.1392128	0.139212	7.1840
Switzerland	Franc	0.2302	0.2302	4.3450
Canada	Dollar	0.2327	0.2327	4.2970
Singapore	Dollar	0.2972	0.2972	3.3650
Australia	Dollar	0.2372	0.2372	4.2160
Taiwan	Dollar	5.8000	5.8000	169.4470
South Korea	Won	1,210.00	1,210.00	53.0221
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.6800	0.6800	1.4706
Thailand	Baht	6.9000	6.9000	2.4390
Indonesia	Rupiah	1,690.00	1,690.00	0.0042
Kuwait	Dinar	0.0500	0.0500	3.5714
Saudi	Riyal	0.6700	0.6700	1.0638
Bahrain	Dinar	0.0700	0.0700	2.5641
Qatar	Riyal	0.6500	0.6500	1.0989
Oman	Rial	0.0700	0.0700	2.5641
Iran	Rial	1,700.00	1,700.00	0.0105
Israel	Shekel	0.8000	0.8000	0.8929
Norway	Krone	1.1000	1.1000	0.7692
Sweden	Krona	1.3000	1.3000	0.6494
Denmark	Krone	1.0000	1.0000	0.7692
Mexico	Peso	1.9000	1.9000	0.4082
New Zealand	Dollar	0.2500	0.2500	3.9216
Czechoslovakia	Koruna	5.0000	5.0000	0.1515
Hungary	Forint	37.0000	37.0000	0.0208
Poland	Zloty	0.6000	0.6000	0.2564
Greece	Euro	0.1500	0.1500	0.2564

T-bill, T-bond . . .

Previous P

worth of T-bonds in each battle auction in January, and P6 billion worth of bonds at each auction in February and March.

The Philippines is Asia's largest sovereign debt issuer after Japan.

The Treasury had offered to sell up to P168 billion worth of treasury bonds each month last October and November.

The Philippines issues treasury bills and treasury bonds, which have a maturity of less than one year, to help finance budget deficits.

With a report from Reuters

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER C1

LIFESTYLE

Editor: Gloria Bernal-Formoso

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 18U • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

Treadmill buying guide

WELL AND GOOD

Nina Lasay

THE TREADMILL is the most popular and user-friendly fitness equipment at home and in the gym. It comes in two types—motorized and non-motorized.

Motor-powered treadmills don't require elbow-grease and cost much less but have serious disadvantages.

Here's what the American College of Sports Medicine has to say on the matter: "Manual treadmills are less expensive and safer because the running belt stops moving when you do. However, manual treadmills usually have smaller running belts, making it difficult to jog or run, let alone maintain a brisk walk. Often, the difficulty in getting the belt to move smoothly on a nonmotorized treadmill increases the likelihood of holding on to the handrail to an effort to generate power (running on treadmill jaws).

"This inconsistent pace may cause muscle strain or difficulty in elevating heart rate. Additionally, the holding on may slower blood pressure from breath- holding. Exercise at home should be easy and something to look forward to. If it is difficult to get the machine to work, you are less likely to exercise. For these reasons, you may want to consider a non-motorized model."

However, motorized treadmills are also the most expensive fitness equipment.

If you are thinking of buying a treadmill for home use, here are some tips to help you make an informed choice and get the most for your money.

Stability

A sturdy treadmill makes you feel as stable as if you are walking on solid ground. A flimsy machine will rock back and forth making you feel insecure and unsteady.

To check stability, stand on the side ramps while the treadmill is running at a slow speed. Incline the machine to the highest level and jump a couple of times on the ramps. Also, try shifting your weight from side to side. The machine should remain stable and should not shake, rattle or wobble.

The treadmill frame should be made of aluminum or steel. Aluminum will not rust but it is considerably more expensive than steel. All major joints should be welded for structural strength, not bolted. The more bolts there are, the bigger the chance they will come loose and make the machine unstable.

Motor

Treadmill motors are rated in terms of "horsepower" (HP). Don't pay any attention to "peak power." What really

CONTINUED C-12

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

THIS advance exercise strengthens and firms the abs and waist.

Equipment:
Exercise mat

Exercise technique:

1. Sit with your knees bent and legs together. Extend (but you are holding and balancing a pole in front of you.

2. Lean back and lift your feet off the mat.

3. Keep your upper body immobile while you tilt your knees from side to side.

4. Do the desired number of repetitions.

5. Return to starting position.

Performance tips:

1. If you are a beginner try the following easier options before performing the advance level.

a. Keep your hands on the floor so your abs won't have to work so hard.

b. Hold the imaginary pole but don't do continuous repetitions. Lean back and do one set on the right and the left. Put your feet down and rest. Repeat.

2. Avoid this exercise if it bothers your back.

3. Place extra cushioning (example: a folded towel) under your buttocks if your tailbone feels uncomfortable.

4. To make the exercise harder, place a weighted medicine ball or dumbbell between your knees.

Repetitions:
Once repetitions equals sitting to the right and left, for 10 repetitions.

PHILIPPINE Airlines' top seven women: Bong Cruz, VP for marketing; Tats Aquino, SAVP for revenue management; Rose Sullivan, cover and entry editor/manager; Jing Javier, brilliant VP for sales; and Jess Garcia

PHILIPPINE Airlines' partying pards: Sunshine gal Kia Domingo, Carla Bello, location executive vice president Honey Su Uy, showgirl Jennifer Gagliano, Tess Garcia, Debbie Cuenghong, Dino Muñoz, Rene Sullivan and Coco Dalisa

BONCK Cheng and Lola Bakengesi-Cheng

MOLLY Estrada, PAL vice president for corporate communications

JG Palmer, brilliant manager for Asia-Pacific of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority

LAS Vegas legegs: Dan Blumey, Harry Kanap and Helen Fothergill, poised in to promote their fun city

MEGA businessmen: Miguel Estrada and Arjun Shruff

Manille gets a glimpse of Vegas

HOT HOTSHOTS: Metrobank Card chair Cindy Valenzuela, George Ty, Metrobank Card mega president Anne Young, and Mary Ty

FUN couple: businessman Sammy Yap and wife Theresa

THREE gals (one to party): Bye catchers Zandra Ty, Jean Francois Chua and Angie Tan

WOMEN of style: Pinky Kuizon and Christine Dacanay in Lebi their mantiki in next year's color, aquamarine.

LADIES of adventure: Fashionistas Victor Chio and cool Hyma Alberto

CELEBRATOR Jane del Rosario-Fernandez with husband Willie

THE HOSTS of the lunch bunch: Belen Lorena Tuason with husband, Antonio V. Manalo Jr.

HAVING a fun time are Juliet Lorena Tuason (seated) and Benny de Leon; with (standing) Olga Ardanuy, Lucia del Rosario, Rony de Leon, Josie Fernandez, Corong and Beth Cuadra

HOTSHOTS and the show gal: Vegas showgirl Jennifer Gagliano is flanked by two happy gentlemen—PAL president Jaime J. Bautista (left) and vice president Felix "Boog" Cruz

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Say Rogero on Rodolfo Maiz

MENTION Las Vegas, and I immediately have a vision of glitz, glamour, gaming, shows, and magnificent honeymoon hotels, all packaged for fun times-to-the-extreme, jollyjingle.

"What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas," the hotels would say. Very complete in-church advice for visitors to the world's mega entertainment capital.

Well, before I could bet my eyelash, I was invited to meet a delegation of Las Vegas' top tourism people that visited Manille a couple of sleeps ago, all brought in by our pal, Philippine Airlines, outside MNL just happens to be the only carrier from Asia that flies there.

What the delegation had to tell us about the latest in Vegas obviously wasn't meant to just stay there.

But, dahlings, there's a lot of super exciting new developments in Vegas now and in the coming year.

The we got from the gal on the more, Jo Palmer, manager for Asia-Pacific of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority; Irma Blumey, mega vice president of sales of the popular Golden Nugget Hotel; super star Helen Fothergill, international sales manager of Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters; and Harry Kanap, advertising and market development of BizCentre International Airport.

Name-dropping, paloogan, a Las Vegas function wouldn't be complete without the familiar icons of the city, the showgirl, in the person of the stunningly gorgeous Jennifer (not Gagliano).

The bigger and wow Jennifer had all the news, including PAL's brilliant president Jaime J. Bautista, executive vice president, cargo Honey Su Uy, brother vice president Willie Bautista, Felix Cruz-and-Boog Javier, and assistant vice president, cyber smart Joan Ramila (holding us here for awesome photos).

Las Vegas is turning 100 on May 15, 2005, with "a party to end all parties," says Jo Palmer.

But the fun begins on New Year's Eve when a multimedia extravaganza lights up the Strip and Downtown areas. At midnight, a spectacular fireworks display will usher in Vegas' centennial year.

There will be a "hollabaloo" beside, over-the-moon of historical events and the unveiling of the world's largest birthday cake weighing over 130,000 pounds! Vegas sure knows how to dream equally Good!

From now, the city is bursting with activity. The long-awaited monorail system is now open, allowing visitors to marvel the whole length of the Strip. There are also free light shows every night, among other fab events.

For world-class entertainment, nothing beats this city. Last month, the ever-inspiring Cirque du Soleil began its fourth Las Vegas production, "KA," at the huge MGM Grand.

The incomparable Celine Dion continues to pack them in at her show, "A New Day" at the Colosseum at Caesar's Palace. She flies on stage, her piano flies on stage, and an expensive audio-visual system takes the audience from concert space to European scene squares.

Now, that's really a sweet show!

Yet, paloogan, there's never a dull moment in Vegas, believe me, and the show must Pacific flight is our very own Philippine Airlines (definitely not!) with its 40th-year Las Vegas!

New Yorkers celebrate

Antonia S. Bluetel Jr., president of Harrison Plaza (the country's first shopping mall), and his ever famous philanthropic wife, Belen Lorena Tuason-Bluetel, hosted a super fun lunch get-together where their long-time pal now New Yorker, Jardy del Rosario Fernandez, celebrated another great year in her colorful life, paloogan. The celebrante was side by side with her husband, man for all seasons Willie Fernandez, no less.

The fun affair was held at the popular Hibachi-ana that has now become a landmark at Cliffside Park in New Jersey. The restaurant gives you a commanding view of George Washington bridge and the Manhattan skyline.

Included in among the lunch bunch were the as-grown up and semi-shy eye-catcher, Antonia T. Bluetel, only child of Belen L. T. and Don Antonio Muriel, who is a Fordham University scholar; and Jardy's favorite godchild, Butch son Pete with Olga Arbasmo; with their son Billy Isabel Lorena Tuason, Dr. Mario Lubin B. Tiu-ong, Benny de Leon; Rony and Sylvia Corong; Cedric and Beth Cuadra; Willie and Josie's children Alan and Kim, with his wife Magalee, the birthday girl's kind. Al del Rosario and wife Lorna, with their children, Mac and Jaime, and Pete T. Tuason, plus so many more former Manille personas, now all richly settled in the Big Apple, and loving every moment of it, paloogan.

It's here

Lorna it is the country's largest bank-to-own-Islamic credit in the Philippines, making it easier for more customers, and unquestionably more privilege-packed.

As I searched M there being introduced, I could see right away all the fresh offerings a Metrobank card holder could avail of.

The new card was introduced in a trendy on-land event at the swinging M Café in Greenhills 4. "It Hotel" turbans were adopted in the Bamboo Push where a large screen was set against towering bamboos.

Eye-visible was hunk Mare Steiners in a trend-cut and by-avant garde designer Ariel Barsalo, highlighting the bright colors of "M Here!"

Brilliant hoter Diane Young, president of the Metrobank Card Corporation, no less, explained, "Metrobank credit cards go beyond worth, making shopping and dining much more exciting. At the end of the day, it's about living!"

Hey, paloogan, "M" will be accepted in more establishments, including Lucerne Resort Boracay, and a Metrobank cardholder can enjoy all its perks, dahlings. Hot hot, hah!

Just look for the "M Here!" icon.

Mr. and Mrs. Hurdles Joseph Pena and Olivia Woods (second and third from left) are awarded by Amway Philippines' Suzanne Camagon (right), corporate services manager, and Jay Andres (left), product marketer for Nutrilite.

Fitness tilt culminates Dec. 17

NUTRILITE, Amway's leading brand of nutritional formula, is supporting Shaklee's World International Great Bodies 2004, the largest fitness competition in Asia Pacific.

"The contest aims to encourage Filipinos to live a healthier and more enjoyable life," said Suzanne Camagon, corporate services manager, Amway Philippines. "We believe that the foundation for building a healthy body and a positive state of mental well-being not only involves proper nutrition, but and mental stimulation but also a healthy exercise regimen."

During the fitness competition's press launch, Amway Philippines shape candidates Joseph Pena and Olivia Woods as Mr. and Miss Hurdles, duke bets for the top spots in the Shaklee's World International Great Bodies 2004 contest. Pena bests their climbers secrets to keeping their bodies fit and healthy, body muscle conditioning, charisma and wit which make them stand out from the rest of the candidates," said Jay Andres, product marketer for Nutrilite, Amway Philippines.

Pena, 30, is a supervising engineer. Woods, 25, is a post-graduate student.

The Shaklee's World International Great Bodies 2004 contest culminates on Dec. 17.

Treadmill buying guide

[illegible]

[illegible] owners is "continuous power." The minimum requirement is 1.5 [illegible] but EPA [illegible] is better. A bigger motor will run more efficiently, handle heat better and last longer than a smaller one.

Be wary of manufacturers who make a big deal about the peak power capacity of their machines. They are usually trying to hide the fact that their treadmills have a low continuous power rating.

One way to check the power of the motor is to run the machine at its lowest speed and firmly plant your foot on the belt. Make a stable stride with one foot in front of the other's. If the motor is strong enough, you should be greatly pushed backward. If you can make the belt stop moving or if the belt is making grinding and groaning noises, the motor is not powerful enough to give you a good walking or running workout.

All treadmills make noise but it shouldn't be so loud that you can't watch television or listen to music while working out.

Deck

The slab under the moving belt, it should be concrete deck to prevent cracking under the pressure of a person walking or running on top of it. It should be laminated to reduce friction building up between it and the belt. A flexible deck can reduce impact to your joints by 30 percent.

Many treadmills use rubber or foam shock absorbers underneath the deck. But over time the rubber or foam becomes compressed, losing its cushioning effect. Superior treadmills use an [illegible]-cured polyurethane shock absorbing material that does not wear out and offers a more even walking surface.

Belt

The belt should be of a size appropriately connected for better heat dissipation, longer life and less chance of slipping. Belt width can be anywhere from 17"-22" and the length from 51"-61". If you are a large or tall person, choose a wider and longer belt. Belts that are too narrow and too short do not have a natural feel and increase the chances of your being thrown off.

Look for a machine that is self-warning or lubricating system you prefer to intervention to lubricate the belt yourself every month. There is also the more expensive. Without the right amount of lubrication, friction and heat will build up, shortening the life of the belt, deck and motor.

Just like a car's wheels, a treadmill's belt and rollers need to be balanced and aligned regularly. The dealer's service team should do the initial calibration when the machine is installed in your home. They should do balancing and alignment every three to four months. This is why you should buy only from a reliable local dealer.

A misaligned belt that is too loose, too tight or off-center will not only wear out prematurely, it will make the motor work harder and hotter than necessary. Some motors overheated because of a misaligned belt.

Even with proper maintenance, the belt, deck and rollers will eventually have to be replaced. If you use your treadmill regularly four, friction, excessive vibration and clues are the top [illegible] of a treadmill.

Lengthen the life of your treadmill by vacuuming your machine and its surrounding area weekly. Pay close attention to the space between the belt and the deck and especially underneath the treadmill by lifting it first.

Sources: American College of Sports Medicine, Runner's World Magazine, and Bicker Runner & Co.'s Home Treadmill Buying Guide

Visit www.buyyourfitness.info

LIFESTYLE

Natural way is better for wellness

HERE are answers to most of our many concerns. There are various ways to prevent health problems and relieve health conditions. As always, the natural way is better for wellness.

What is your suggestion for insomniac?

If you can't sleep and keep tossing and turning in bed or even worry about your inability to sleep, well, help is here.

Determine what causes your sleeplessness.

• Drugs (for hypertension, diabetes, asthma or allergies, antidepressants, etc.) can interrupt your sleep. Know the side effects of your medicines.

• Poor diet (rich in fat and preservatives)

• Emotional turmoil (anger and stress)

Insomnia is a symptom of an underlying disorder so it is best to consult a physician. Once you have ruled out drugs and illness, then you can seek an alternative therapy.

Avoid the following foods before bedtime:

• Alcohol (especially red wine), caffeine (chocolate, cheeses, bacon, sausages). Many prevent your brain from releasing serotonin, a hormone needed for sleep.

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

"Take a glass of warm non-fat milk or have a turkey dinner (it's an myth), as amino acid that stimulates the brain to relax environments.

Do the slow-breathing exercise. Inhale five counts, hold three counts, exhale five. This ought to slow down your breathing. Through guided imagery or realize that you are in your ideal place of relaxation, a sanctuary that is peaceful and undisturbed.

Take a vitamin mineral therapy (or one cholesterol controls, 200 mg, and one magnesium, 125 mg (those taken a day plus three tablets of each half an hour before bedtime; they work together to produce serotonin). Chamomile, valerian root, skullcap tea daily before bedtime. If still fails, take 1.5 mg of melatonin 15 minutes before bedtime.

Visualization

Imagine you are going down a stairway with 10 steps. With every step you take, count backwards from 10 to 1. The last step will take you to a calm, placid lake shore. Upon reaching the last step, imagine you have a small stone or flower across the water. The stone skims the surface and lands on the bottom of this clear, peaceful lake. Feel relaxed now.

Is there a natural way to tap the body's healing powers?

Yes, and you can begin right now. Here's your assignment:

Remove sick food from the diet—all red meats, fats rich, fatty foods, fried fish, whole milk, even low-fat milk, dairy products (cheddar cheese, butter), sugar, white flour, spicy foods, condiments, and most canned/processed/microwaved foods.

Note: These foods lead to obesity and foreign protein antagonists. Replace with a variety of vegetables (raw, legumes (beans), whole grains, seeds and nuts.

Cut out alcohol and smoking completely.

Start an exercise regimen that will be a lifetime commitment.

Practice meditation daily and set aside some prayer time.

How do I strengthen my immune system?

Know that your body is exposed to attacks by free radical chemicals (which, according to the latest research, makes the body rancid). The free radicals, highly active and damaging atoms, can be caused by pollution, processed food rich in coloring and preservatives, stress, poor diets, etc. Boosting your immune system is like working an armor against free-radical attack.

Consume more antioxidants, substances that can neutralize free radicals, via vegetables and fruits. Some antioxidant super rich foods are watercress, oranges, strawberries, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, and most green leafy veggies.

Congratulations are in order

The Farm at San Benito (Lipa, Batangas) won the distinguished Spa Asia Awards in Singapore—Best Holistic Healing Program, Best Retreat, Best New Age Activity. Call 714-3496.

Shangrila Spa in Boracay bagged the Spa Asia Crystal Award for Best Rejuvenation Program. Call (036) 2887888.

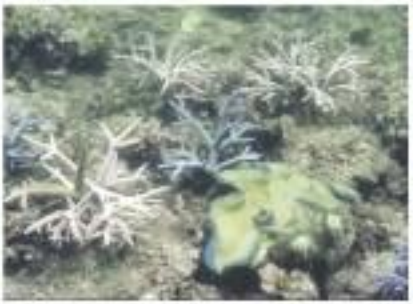
Love and light!

References: The Step By Step Nutrition Book

Cort Mitchell's Passport Bible for the 21st Century

Watch "Quiet for Real Acting" ABC Channel 23, 7 p.m., Sunday, produced by ABC-CBN Foundation and the Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care, hosted by Dulce Castillo-Cancio and myself.

Listen to "Mid Beauty At Noon", 8 p.m., Tuesday, 93.9FM.



A "RELOCATED" giant clam and transplanted branching corals enhance the scenery at the Hundred Islands National Park (above); giant clams at a Pew restoration site in Kalutas, Quezon (left)

Underwater garden needs rescue

By Michelle Reyes
Correspondent

CORAL reefs are sometimes called underwater gardens. They are colorful, they grow nicely and are home to many interesting creatures. But the similarity ends there.

Corals are animals, not plants, and coral reefs are complex ecosystems, not a random collection of organisms that can be readily rearranged.

While flowers are easily replaced, corals are not. They are sensitive to a wide range of factors and can be stressed by temperature changes, fluctuating water salinity and pollution, among others.

By now, many people know that coral reefs are declining in most parts of the world, the Philippines included. What to do? Can anything be done to stop or even reverse coral degradation?

Restoration project

Dr. Edgardo Gomez of the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute really wanted to know. So he set up a coral reef restoration project under the Pew Fellows in Marine Conservation program to try and find out.

He learned that not all damaged coral reefs can be restored. For most restoration sites from Iloilo, Negros Occ in the north to Sarangani Island, Davao in the south had been established in the Philippines to help determine which methods be redesigned, why and how.

The sites were chosen mainly because of existing management system or the potential to work one, or because of marine reserves that needed rehabilitation and had potential for community-managed fishing. Other criteria for selection were clear water, good light, and normal salinity and water temperature. Abundant and diverse coral species in coral by reefs were necessary to serve as "donors" for coral transplants.

Previous efforts

Gomez had already been involved in previous efforts at transplanting corals and endangered giant clams (*Tridacna spp.*), and in developing practical techniques for such activities.

His Pew project set out to use similar methods in damaged sites to enhance biodiversity and productivity as well as to improve their aesthetic appeal. Many corals reproduce asexually by fragmentation.

Transplantation involves collecting naturally occurring fragments or cutting tiny pieces from existing large colonies. The fragments are then brought to the rehabilitation sites and secured underwater with ordinary cement.

In the case of giant clams, cultures were brought from the clam nursery in Bolinao, Pangasinan to transplantation sites, sometimes involving travel of up to 25 hours by land, sea and air. The animals, once settled in their new homes, were monitored regularly for progress and survival.

Communities as stewards

The goal in both coral and clam transplantation initiatives is to transfer stewardship of restored sites to local communities once the project takes off.

To prepare for that event, the project team conducted seminars to raise the environmental and conservation consciousness of coastal inhabitants and visitors. Giant clam nursery training was given to non-government organizations and local community leaders. Brochures, flyers and posters on clam-conservation were produced.

The response was positive. Officials, led by the Bolinao town mayor, teachers and regular citizens in Alaburat Island, Quezon, one of the transplantation sites, observed the actual deployment of transplants.

"With results, she noted to reassure people a little more process, time high school teacher asked to be shown a coral fragment become the fact no idea how coral looked. Her reaction upon seeing it is similar to many Filipinos: "Akala ko batong-bato."

No instant gratification

That kind of reaction is just one of the challenges the project has to overcome. The study would not show instant results and might even take years before its effects could be felt. Some local politicians did not understand what the initiative was all about.

HARD work pays off: branching corals starting to reassemble after transplantation at the Hundred Island National Park

CORAL transplant "terraces" in Bolinao, Zambales

The survival rate of novel fragments averages 50 percent, depending on the site. But in certain places, it has been as high as 80 percent to the delight of those involved.

Mayor Jesus Edena of Masinloc, Zambales had already expressed the hope that the municipality's Pew demonstration site should be replicated throughout Masinloc Bay Inc. at any rate, the project has already helped create awareness of the need for the conservation of threatened species like the giant clams and corals. Its lack of resources has prevented the immediate expansion of the project to the other towns, but plans are being developed to overcome this problem.

One site in Alabat Island, Quezon is a result of a painstakingly reconnaissance tour in classic Tagalog from the head of a local environment group who looked for a "savior" for Lamon Bay.

Given this hopeful sign, while Dr. Gomez does not expect that the Pew project can "save" entire ecosystems, he thinks a step in the right direction has certainly been made already.

Although corals may look like plants, they are actually microscopic animals and not as easily replaceable

LACK of a proper diving suit and fins doesn't stop a Divemaster from helping in the Pew transplantation activities.

DR. Edgardo Gomez, Pew project leader, confer with local officials in Masinloc, Zambales

THE PHOTO that inspired a project: corals naturally recruited into a live giant clam

A CORAL transplant creating a new base for itself by secreting its natural "cement"

TRANSPLANTED giant clams in Alabat, Quezon show off their natural color variations

LIFESTYLE

Grief and solace in Cavinti

I spend the afternoon reading about Edna St. Vincent Millay and taking a snooze while lying on a mat under the shade of bamboo trees

By Elizabeth Lalanga
Correspondent

IT doesn't get any better than this. I am writing outside the guesthouse of retired activist Marivi Dizon on a one-hectare island in Lake Lamot, Cavinti, Laguna. The waters on the western side of this island are the equivalent of a warm thoroughfare. It is Lamot's Edsa. Coming or going, the boatmen have to pass through it.

Three generations of dogs live here on the island with two kittycats. The alliterative names of the dogs are Pia, Booger and Panda. The last one ate very protective of Marivi, who likes to keep things in order. They jump in me through the open windows as I approach the main door of the octagonal cottage.

The house is so designed that there are alternating wooden jalousies and open spaces so it's cool anytime of the day. But I prefer it outdoors. Feminist environmentalist activist Anna Leah Bandilla (Marivi's pen name and who identifies herself as "siberian caught in west cancun but who manages to take it easy" has laid out a pretty garden with many young trees. She had rocks and pebbles brought in from neighboring islets and arranged them to form a slap-up.

Away from that busy part of the island, I count for about half an hour over the flatpan with a slippery stone-covered cape serving as my lifeline. Then I walk, all skipping and rest, to the sunset and sunrise viewing areas—groups of trees for sitting and watching these natural phenomena. Or one can just listen to the water rippling and watch it blown by the breeze in one direction.

I have placed a folding table on a bed of rocks in the makeshift gazebo. Anna had the first sides screened using old lalong nets, like and the same material for the roof, so I can read in peace very well.

I must be extremely quiet on Bonacay except for the occasional roar of motorboat jet skis from a neighboring resort. Jet skis have no place in a watershed lake because they create ripples that erode the banks of the islands, unlike in Subic or Boracay where the ripples flow out to the sea. These jet skiers rush hotel-shirtless and do not observe maritime courtesy. They whiz past the homes that are left rocking erratically in the wake of the wrong waves.

Windless afternoon

My sister Gigi sends a text message asking when I'm coming home. I tell her to text me only when there is an emergency. I feel sorry for her with her cultured big toe and being left by the responsible of the family so she has to feed my brothers.

It's a windless but sunny morning. I am up at 5 a.m., sipping a mug of green tea and watching the horizon. The moon is still up, and I see a white plane flying past it. The first streaks of sunlight fall on red and yellow petals of Santa Sindi roses from across us, as the colors are more intense.

Last night I had my fill of listening to crickets and marsh thrushes while I gazed at the moon and the silvery glow it cast on the water. The wind was up as I wrapped my beak sarong around my shoulders. I showered after our dinner of fried tilapia caught from Marivi's fish cage and a salad of tomatoes, onions, sliced green mangoes, red eggs and nuoc mam. I took the salad without the pan's dressing. I was in bed by 10 p.m.

Breakfast talk centers on another island visitor, a businesswoman undergoing depression in the wake of her breast cancer and menopause. She has a 13-year-old daughter, and one subject of her constant brooding is what will happen to the girl if her health takes a turn for the worse.

Her husband, who listens quietly in our retreat, spoken bubbles of thought, is so supportive, the type who would love nothing

Magazine on cancer now off the press

"HEADLINE na 'Headwood,'" "Sex, Virginia, There Is Sex (During) After Cancer," and "PET Scan, A Mom's (and Woman's) Best Friend" are just three of the articles that make up the maiden issue of The Big C, the country's first magazine to deal exclusively with cancer. It is now off the press.

Sustained by breast cancer survivor Jeanie Soriano Andrews as a form of thanksgiving, The Big C aims to offer the latest and most stimulating information about cancer and research advances.

The Core Group Publishing Inc., The Big C publisher, is a small group of professionals who, individually, had a run-in with cancer either as patient, caregiver or medical practitioner. And Ivan, one of the group's founding members, thought of putting up a magazine as a way of contributing to cancer awareness.

Serving as medical adviser for the magazine is Andrew Aaron M. Panaman Manuel P. Lopez, a medical oncologist and hematologist who specializes in bone-marrow transplants. Dr. Lopez shares a personal motivation with Andrews—more reality: he lost his father to cancer. The doctor, in turn, introduced to the group Stella Figueroa Jaffee of a recipient of bone-marrow transplant and includes Mira, the husband of a patient diagnosed with acute leukemia.

The helping started in earnest in November when The Big C debuted with Lydia Morales, a cancer survivor, and husband, popular songwriter Jim Morales.

Each issue of the magazine contains medical stories, feature stories and column pieces. The medical stories highlight the coordinated multidisciplinary approach to cancer diagnosis and treatment. The column pieces aim to stimulate, explain or entertain and invoke cautious cajole on fashion, lifestyle and even book and music reviews that bear on life with cancer. Forming the bulk of the magazine are the feature stories—real-life dramas, or trials and triumphs fleshed out by the voices of patients, survivors, caregivers and doctors.

Call 8133000 or 8125755.

Grief and solace in Cavinti

From page C6

more than to take his wife dancing. He says she was only four on the dance floor and on waltz, so I tell her she should take up a physical activity apart from her unwanted office duties and parent-down workload—something on the artistic side, something she had long put off doing, like fixing her photo album, labeling the photos, etc. Or she can even don't scrapbook, one page a day to release all her negative thoughts.

Our convalescing friend has quit going to a psychiatrist who, she says, only gives her sedatives or pills to put her to sleep. She has turned to a priest trained as a psychotherapist who has couple her meditation, relaxation and visualization techniques. But again she confesses to not being disciplined enough to practice them every day.

Anna calls her an obsessive-compulsive, driven type, a control freak who cannot totally give up the office routine, even temporarily.

Epidemic among women

I share my own experience of depression over the years, including its most severe bout, that landed me for 20 days in Medical City in 1997. Anna tells about how a few years ago she was moving towards clinical depression after her own breakup with an ex and at the same time she was also in the process of helping Marivi cope with grief over the death of her previous partner.

Much, much later after this weekend, Anna e-mails me a letter about Vida doing about depressive seemingly almost like an epidemic among unemployed/underemployed women." She calls it her "unscientific observation. I know that the emotional and spiritual causes are varied, but many have something to do with being disillusioned and/or losing faith. If menopause is the overuse of puberty, and it is during puberty that we form our ideals and standards, how can depression be not normal? Maybe we have to look at it from a different perspective, more like something to deal with and befriend—rather than avoid—when it comes into our lives."

She continues, "I wonder if the energies of our minds in a depressive state need to be tapped in a way that we haven't really imagined. I wonder if we encompass it to the unexplored depths of the sea that many of us fear. Do you remember the movie 'The Piano' where she was drowning and she was saying something about going down? Something like a bell sightseer, something like a mysterious dream. Maybe being morbid and suicidal isn't all there is to life. Maybe being thin and bubbly and good-looking isn't all there is to beauty. Who knows? Some of the things people in depression feel are actually signals of life beyond this earth as we know it."

Meanwhile, my own mood swings have stabilized. I spend the afternoon reading more pages about Miss Julia by Vincent Millay's life while lying on a mat laid on the sloping ground under the shade of a clump of bamboo trees singing their whistling song. I put a bit of mistletoe lotion so I will not burn as the sun climbs higher. I take a snooze and cover my face with a red hat, the very same one you hadst Cynthia Alberto Diaz gave me last Christmas.

When I wake up, I see a red ant in the air. For a moment, I imagine it is flying. But no, it is climbing the very fine filaments, hardly visible unless you squint at it against the light. Then you are the thin thread it is using to climb to build an ants' nest on the roof of the cottage.

Afterwards, another swim in the lake. Anna tells me I shouldn't go too far. But I find safe in the lukewarm dark blue water. Lake Users from the festivals that some portions of the lake have a depth of 20 meters) trees piled one on top of another.

The smallest tidbits of fun since my stay. I am not about to go down over some long-ago heartbreak. And I bend for the moment indoors, the simple fare we have each meal and the comforting company of women and a sympathetic sympathetic man.

Sleep paralysis and astral projection

I AM responding to the letter of Eileen E. Santos of Mandaluyong City who has been experiencing "sleep paralysis" with my comments. This is also in reply to others who have asked the same question.

Mr. Santos has done excellent research on sleep paralysis which is worth sharing.

"I want to share my experience, as well as seek your guidance. For several years now, I've been experiencing the so-called 'sleep paralysis'. I have been completely unaware of this sleep 'disorder' until my curiosity made me do some research on the Internet. According to my research, sleep paralysis (SP) is possibly a hereditary disorder in which one experiences very frightening seconds or minutes of total body paralysis with little respiration and eye movement.

"It occurs... feels awake, but he cannot move or speak. (Other) common symptoms include being shaked or suffocated, hearing strange noises like footsteps and voices, seeing beings or dark shadows, and feeling like (the presence) of someone in the room. Although often these symptoms (lead) the victim to believe in ghosts, mis-transmission of neural signals in the brain causes sleep paralysis.

Brain signals

"When a person sleeps, his brain signals to inhibit any muscle contraction. If he comes into consciousness before the brain sends signals to activate muscle contraction, he cannot move his body and, consequently, becomes 'paralyzed.'"

There is really a pathological or medical condition causing sleep paralysis. However, I believe this is different. I have not heard of any ill effects resulting from the condition, except fear and tiredness upon return of mobility.

As you yourself pointed out, the medical condition is called narcolepsy: "a neurological condition in which the sufferer involuntarily falls asleep, with no warning, at any time of the day, even while performing an activity."

But what you have experienced is definitely not of this type. In your case, and those of many others, you don't "fall asleep and become paralyzed," as in narcolepsy. You wake up from sleep and can't move.

Out-of-body experience

This is entirely different. A great majority of such experiences are related more to astral projection or out-of-body experience (OOBE) rather than a medical disorder.

During sleep paralysis, a person may try to cry out or fight the presence they believe is responsible for causing them to be paralyzed. This has never helped me, nor anyone else I've heard of, but somehow we have the innate feeling that we must "fight" this.

Usually, movement returns slowly within a minute or so. These hallucinations are called 'hypnagogic' and 'hypnopompic'. They occur as the onset of sleep and just before waking, the period we call the 'twilight stages' of sleep. They can be auditory, visual, tactile and proprioceptive. A proprioceptor is a sensory receptor found mainly in the joints, muscles, tendons, and inner ear that detects motion and can also detect the position of a limb by responding to internal stimuli.

This means, when a person feels attached into the bed so that a container is sitting on his chest it can really seem like a) hallucination, because of proprioceptors, we can feel as though we are falling through the bed, even though we actually are...quite stationary.

Undetected

The problem in understanding the real nature of "sleep paralysis" is that medical science has no knowledge of the "astral body" and its nature. No medical instrument has ever detected its presence and therefore, in medical theories, they tend to explain everything in terms of their own perspective or paradigm. This is understandable.

However, there is a whole body of literature that draws ample evidence of the astral body that can detach from the physical body in sleep or even when fully awake. Once we acknowledge the existence of this subtle body, then the phenomenon of the so-called sleep paralysis becomes understandable.

When the astral body leaves the physical body, the person cannot move because his consciousness goes with it. It is like the driver who gets out of his vehicle and therefore cannot drive it. The vehicle cannot move by itself.

Natural event

Astral projection is a natural event or state and should not be considered a disorder or a pathological condition. Almost everyone goes out of his body while asleep and travels. Most of the time however this happens without "awakening" to the astral world so we may not realize what has really happened when we wake up. That's when the trouble begins.

We become frightened because we cannot move. We try to move our body but we cannot because the more we struggle, the more there will be a misalignment in the vibrations between the astral and physical body.

When a person feels like he is flying or being attacked, it is because his astral body is actually flying while his physical body remains in bed. That's why doctors call this "hallucination," actually it is not.

When the physical body gets jolted into waking consciousness and one already owns, that's the exact moment the astral body returns to the physical body. One experiences this as a jolt or tumble in flipping. It's all very simple and logical, if one accepts and understands the astral body and its capabilities.

Next week: Sleep paralysis and alien abduction.

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INNER AWAKENING

Juliane T. Lucanio

Gift-giving for PGH patients

THE PSI Kappa Mu Fraternity will hold its annual gift-giving and variety show, "Only the Pillows", 7 p.m., Dec. 15, at the Philippine General Hospital quadrangle.

Founded in 1933, the fraternity is a duly recognized organization of the University of the Philippines Manila College of Medicine.

The show is meant to bring cheer to charity patients and their families as well as PGH employees, including doctors and medical residents, who will spend the holidays in the hospital.

Featured artists include Estelle Bautista, stand-up comedian Eliezer, Manila city councilor Bobot Ortega, and upcoming OPM band Bridge.

Gift packs for patients will include food, toiletries and other items. Additional donations are welcome.

Call (+63-2) 077-1563 or 404-1407.

DIFFERENT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

E. EXCEL has the following holiday gift suggestions: Yoghurah Fruit Basket; Cactus Milk Bar Set, which gently cleanses and softens all skin types, tightens pores and pampers skin the natural way; Handy-pal Pack kills most germs and bacteria without the use of soap or water to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Call 811-1807.